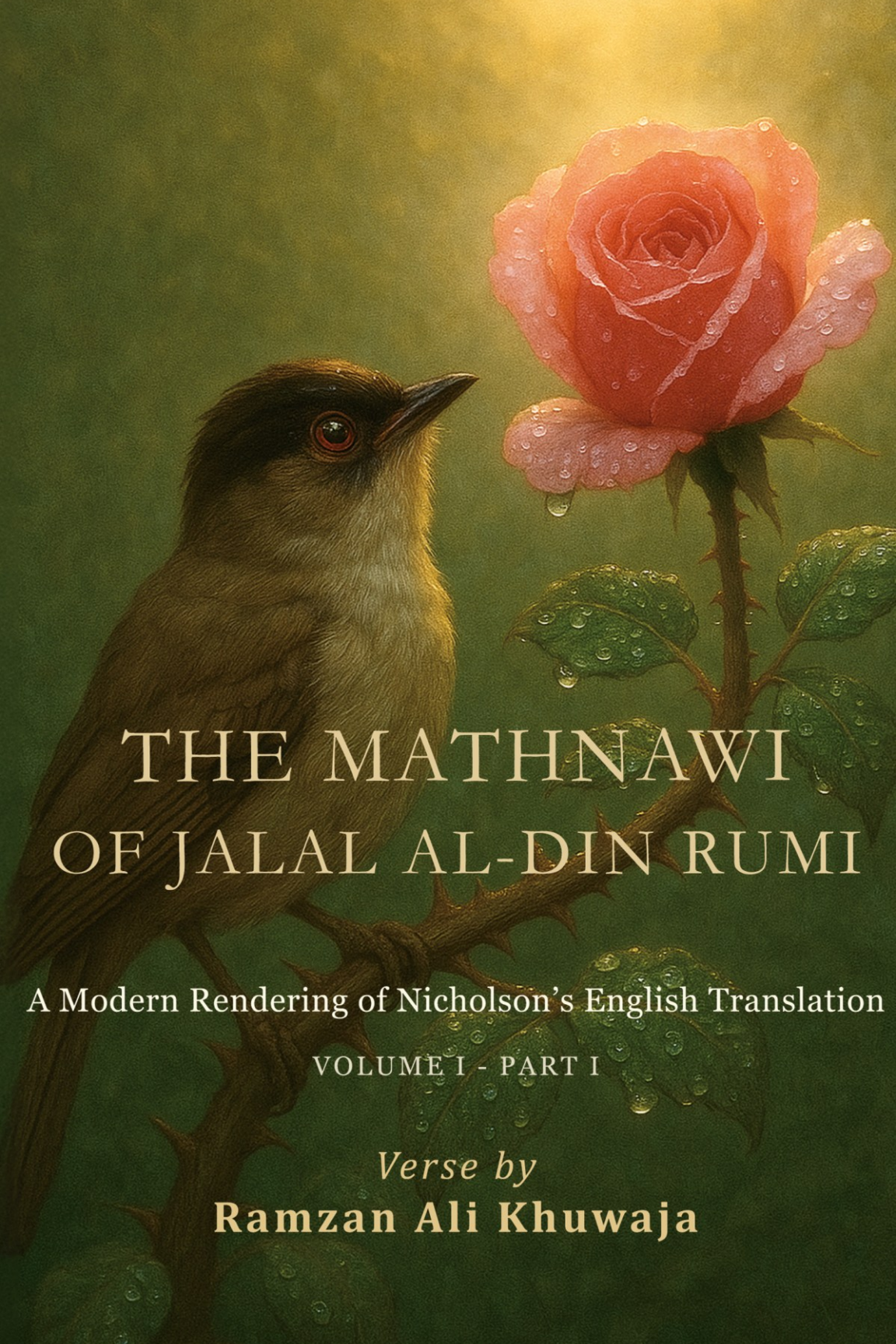

THE MATHNAWI OF JALAL AL-DIN RUMI

A Modern Rendering of Nicholson's English Translation

VOLUME I - PART I

Verse by

Ramzan Ali Khuwaja

The Masnavi of Jalal al-Din Rumi

A Modern Poetic Rendering

Based on the English Translation by Reynold A. Nicholson

Volume I – Part I

Poetry by Mawlana Jalal al-Din Muḥammad Rumi

Rendered in Modern Poetic English by Ramzan Ali Khuwaja

The Masnavi of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

Based on the public domain English translation by Reynold A. Nicholson

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About This Edition:

This edition was inspired by Reynold A. Nicholson's public domain English translation of The Masnavi (1868–1945), a foundational contribution to Rumi scholarship.

All modernized verses, layout, notes, and visual components included here are original and offered freely for spiritual enrichment and public use.

For inquiries, collaborations, or additional resources:

whirling.pens@gmail.com

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Introduction

Rumi's Masnavi: A Journey Back to the Divine

More than seven hundred years ago, a Sufi-poet and mystic named Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī began dictating a vast and luminous work to his disciple Husām al-Dīn—verse upon verse that would become The Masnavi-ye Maʿnavi, also known simply as The Masnavi, or "The Spiritual Couplets."

He composed it in Konya, then a flourishing center of the Seljuk empire—a city that lies today in modern-day Turkey—and wrote the entire work in Persian, the literary and spiritual language of his time.

What emerged was not merely a poem, but a spiritual cosmos: a universe of stories, symbols, parables, and piercing insights all orbiting a single, blazing truth—that we are souls separated from our Source, longing for reunion with God.

This book is the first installment in a twelve-part series adapted from Rumi's original Masnavi, which was composed in six books. Dividing the work into twelve parts makes it more accessible, reflective, and easy to absorb.

This volume begins your journey into Rumi's vast spiritual cosmos—one story, one flame, one insight at a time.

Rumi's Masnavi is often described as a "Qur'an in Persian," and for good reason: it weaves divine wisdom, mystical vision, and deep love for the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessing Upon Him) into its every line. Yet it is also universal in its reach. The Masnavi speaks to the human heart beyond time and place—calling us back to what we have forgotten: our soul began with God, and its deepest longing is to return to Him.

Why This Translation? Why Now?

In recent decades, Rumi has become one of the most widely quoted poets in the world. His words appear on coffee mugs, Instagram posts, and in therapy rooms. And yet, with a few exceptions, much of what circulates in his name is far removed from his authentic voice. Often stripped of his faith, his context, and his rootedness in the vast Islamic spiritual tradition and the path of divine Love, these popular versions tend to present Rumi as vague inspiration—charming, but rootless. What remains are poetic fragments—beautiful, yes—but disconnected from the spiritual fire that gave them life.

In contrast, this translation takes a different path.

Rumi's Masnavi is not only timeless—it is urgently relevant to the modern soul. We live in an age of distraction, anxiety, and spiritual amnesia. Many are lost in the noise of materialism, digital overstimulation, and loneliness. And yet, the ache remains. We know something is missing. The Masnavi is a guide for the one who feels that ache. It offers not just comfort, but direction.

This work aims to make Rumi accessible—to anyone seeking meaning—without severing him from the Islamic and Sufi soil in which he grew. This is not a simplified summary or a mystical paraphrase. It is a faithful re-rendering of the original Persian verses, using Reynold A. Nicholson's classic English translation as a foundation.

Nicholson's work is unmatched in accuracy, but his early 20th-century language can be complex for modern readers. His precise, literal translations have been reworked into clear, contemporary, poetic English. This language speaks to the heart and mind of today's reader, without diluting the sacred depth of the original.

In doing so, the intention is to bring forward the universality within the particular—to show how the teachings of this 13th-century Muslim mystic still speak directly to us now: calling us to remember God, to purify the heart, to love fully, and to return home to the Source we have forgotten.

A Path Through These Pages

A Guide to the Structure and Spirit of This Translation

Rumi's Masnavi is not a book to be rushed. It is not a novel with a linear plot, nor a theological manual with tidy categories. It is a spiritual companion—woven with stories, parables, reflections, and ecstatic insight. To truly receive it, you must read it slowly, inwardly, and with a listening heart.

About the Masnavi

The full Masnavi-ye Maʿnavi, as translated into English by Reynold A. Nicholson, contains approximately 16,555 verses across six volumes (Volumes I to VI). Each of these volumes is rich and expansive in its own right.

- Volume I alone includes roughly 3,974 verses, and
- This book—Volume I, Part I—covers the first 2,071 verses.

That means what you're holding is not just an introduction to Rumi's world—it is a full and self-contained experience of its first vast movement.

How the Masnavi Flows

The Masnavi is not arranged in a simple, step-by-step structure. Instead, it unfolds like the spiritual path itself: sometimes through story, sometimes through sudden insight, sometimes through dialogue, sometimes through parable within parable. You will find:

- Stories of kings and beggars, saints and fools
- Spiritual reflections on love, trust, suffering, and divine purpose
- Dialogues and discourses—between Rumi and his listener, or between lovers, seekers, prophets, or animals
- And often, these forms are interwoven: a story may pause for a lesson; a parable may open into a prayer.

This layered and dynamic structure is part of the Masnavi's spiritual genius—but it can also be overwhelming for modern readers.

Our Approach: Book Sections

To help readers travel this path with clarity and depth, Nicholson's continuous translation has been broken into 'Book Sections'—discrete, carefully crafted parts that function like mini-chapters. Each section is built around a central theme, story, or spiritual reflection.

These Book Sections allow you to read the Masnavi in digestible, reflective portions, without losing the thread of Rumi's larger vision.

- Sometimes a single story spans multiple Book Sections.
- Sometimes one section contains several short, related reflections.
- Each section begins and ends at a natural pause or turning point in the original.

This structure is designed to make the Masnavi more accessible—to modern minds, modern attention spans, and modern souls.

What You'll Find in Each Book Section

Every Book Section is carefully designed to guide you through The Masnavi in a way that is both accessible and spiritually grounded. Each section includes:

- A clear and meaningful title that reflects the central spiritual theme
- The verse range from Reynold A. Nicholson's English translation, helping you locate the corresponding passages and orient yourself in the larger journey of The Masnavi
- A luminous summary, written in plain and reflective language, to prepare your heart for what lies ahead
- An illustration or visual to engage your imagination and bring the poetic moment to life
- A modern poetic rendering of the verses—arranged in short lines to support reflection, rhythm, and spiritual depth
- Subheadings are interwoven every dozen lines or so—like signposts along the spiritual path—to help you slow down, mark transitions, and read more reflectively

This format honours Nicholson's faithful scholarship while offering a new emotional and spiritual resonance for today's reader. It invites you to pause, to breathe, and to receive the wisdom of Rumi with openness and presence.

How to Read the Verses on the Page

The poetic verses in each Book Section flow across two columns—first the left column, then the right. Read each column down before moving to the next, like a path unfolding in two parallel steps. This layout is designed to support slow, reflective reading, offering a balance of rhythm and white space.

When You're Ready to Explore More

To support your journey beyond these pages, the final section of this book offers a curated set of resources—both timeless and modern. Whether you seek a more profound understanding of Rumi's teachings, wish to explore other translations of the Masnavi, or want to browse online gateways dedicated to his work, you'll find guidance there. These recommendations are not academic requirements, but invitations—for the heart that wants to travel further.

Acknowledgements

This work finds its deepest inspiration in the monumental English translation of The Masnavi by Reynold A. Nicholson. His tireless scholarship, linguistic precision, and profound sensitivity to Rumi's spiritual world have served as a foundational compass for this new rendering. Without Nicholson's pioneering work, this project would not have been possible.

This book also reflects the remarkable support made possible by advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Tools such as large language models (including deep research and reasoning models) and image generators were employed to assist with textual interpretation, verse structure composition, rendering validation, glossary development, visual illustration, and various stages of book editing, cover design and publishing. These AI tools served as *assistive collaborators*—enhancing the creative and analytical process while remaining fully under human guidance.

Heartfelt thanks are due to my wife, Farah Naz Khuwaja, and to my children, Maleeha Khuwaja and Rumi Ali Khuwaja—for their unwavering love, encouragement, and patience throughout this journey. Their presence, sacrifices, and steadfast support have been the quiet strength behind this work. With deepest gratitude and love,

Ramzan Ali Khuwaja

An Invitation

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Rumi is not
a voice from the past—

He is a friend
at your side.

These pages are not to conquer,
but to enter—*slowly*.

Walk with him,
step by step.

Let the words
slowly water your soul,
and draw you back
to the garden
you never left—
only forgot.

The Journey Begins ...

Book Sections

The Reed's Lament of Longing

(Verses 1–34)

Summary

In this tender and aching prologue to the Masnavi, Jalal al-Din Rumi speaks in the voice of the reed flute—a symbol of the soul exiled from its Divine origin. Torn from the reed-bed, the flute's music mourns its separation and calls out for

hearts that have known the pain of parting. This is not a lament of this world but of the spirit's severance from the Source.

Every human being, Rumi tells us, longs to return to that primordial union with God. Yet though the reed sings of Love's fire and the bloodied road of longing, few truly listen—most hear only what their ego wishes to hear. The inner secret, the Divine yearning, can only be known by hearts illuminated and ears awakened by spiritual light.

The cry of the reed is not mere sound. It is fire, a flame kindled by Love. It speaks of mystical truths, of Majnun's madness, of the burning grief that purifies. Those untouched by this fire—those content with the outer life—remain deaf to the call.

Rumi warns that worldly greed, pride, and the chains of desire confine the soul. Only Love can break those bonds. Love heals; Love elevates—Love even makes mountains dance. Sinai itself was drunk with the Divine when Love appeared, and Moses fell in awe.

These opening lines lay the foundation for the spiritual journey of the Masnavi: from separation to longing, from longing to purification, from purification to Love, and from Love to Union. The reed is the soul, hollowed out so it can sing. Its cry invites us to remember what we've forgotten—and return.

Poem Verses

The Lament Begins

Listen—
to the reed
as it tells its tale.
Its cry speaks only of separation.

Since I was cut
from the reed-bed,
my song has stirred
both man and woman to tears.

I long for a heart
that knows this tearing,
so I may open the sorrow
that lives in longing.

Everyone—
when torn from their source—
aches to return
to the time of union.

The Sound None Understand

In every gathering,
I sang my cry—
among the joyful,
among the broken.

Each soul befriended me,
according to their way of seeing.
But none sought the secret
within me.

My secret is not hidden
from my song.
But ear and eye
must awaken
to see it.

The soul is not veiled
from the body,
nor the body from the soul—
yet still,
none may truly see the soul.

This sound you hear
from the reed—
it is fire, not wind.
And if your heart holds no flame,
let it become nothing.

The Fire of Love

This fire in the reed
is the fire of Love—
its wine,
the burning of Divine longing.

The reed is friend
to those torn apart.
Its song slices through the heart.

Where else have you seen
both poison and cure
in a single reed?

Where else a companion
and a lover
so full of yearning?

The reed speaks of a path
stained in blood—
the road Majnun walked
in his madness for Layla.

This wisdom
is given only to those
who've died to their senses.
The tongue
has no buyer
but the soul's listening ear.

Grief Burning Through Time

Our days—
so full of grief—
pass strangely.
They travel
with the heat of sorrow.

If our days are gone,
so be it.
You remain, O Lord—
none is holy but You.

One who is not a fish
tires of water.
And one who has no bread
finds each day too long.

The raw
cannot understand the ripe.
So I speak less—
Farewell.

The Cage of Greed

O child of the soul,
break your chains.
How long
will you sell your soul
for gold and silver?

If you pour the sea
into a clay jug,
it can hold
only a day's worth.

The jug—
like the eye of the greedy—
is never full.

The oyster
finds its pearl
only when it surrenders.

Only the one
whose cloak
has been torn
by fierce Love
is made pure
of all greed and fault.

Love That Shakes the Heavens

Hail to you, O Love—
Healer of every wound,
Physician of pride,
Master of our soul's cure.

Through Love,
the body
rose to the skies—
a mountain
began to dance.

Mount Sinai
was drunk with Love,
and Moses

fell in a swoon.

If I could find
one whose lips
spoke my language,
I too would tell
all that can be told.

But if one is torn
from a true companion,
he grows silent—
even if his heart
holds a hundred songs.

When the rose is gone
and the garden withers,
what nightingale
still sings?

The Mirror of the Heart

The Beloved is All—
the lover
but a veil.
The Beloved lives—
the lover
is a shadow.

When Love forgets the lover,
he is like a bird
with broken wings.
Pity him.

How could I
see anything before or after,
when His Light
is not before me,
nor behind?

Love wants this Word
to be made manifest—
but how can a mirror reflect
if it is not polished?

Do you know
why your soul's mirror
shows no image?
Because it is clouded—
rusted over.

The King's Hidden Longing

(Verses 35–77)

Summary

In this spiritual parable, a great king falls in love with a beautiful handmaiden, whose sudden illness becomes the king's deepest trial. Despite his wealth and power, despite summoning the finest healers, no earthly remedy can save her. Their failure is not due to a lack of skill, but their pride kept them from invoking God's will. The lesson is clear: even wisdom without humility becomes blindness.

At last, the king surrenders his pride and turns directly to God. In the mosque, barefoot and weeping, he lays his heart bare. This act of utter humility—of crying out with his whole being—becomes the key that opens the gate of mercy. In his sleep, he dreams of a saint who tells him help will arrive in

the form of a stranger. And so it happens: a luminous figure appears, carrying the presence of the Divine. The king recognizes him at once—not just with his eyes, but with his heart.

This stranger is no ordinary healer; he is a vessel of Divine healing, a friend of God (wali), one of the hidden ones sent to respond when human strength fails. In meeting him, the king realizes the deeper truth: it was never the maiden, but this stranger, this guide, who was his true Beloved. The whole story is a mirror, showing how worldly love and loss can awaken the soul to its higher longing, to the secret presence of God hidden in disguise.

The tale is about Divine love, about recognizing the failure of ego, and the grace that enters when the heart bows completely.

Poem Verses

The King Sees the Maiden

Come close, friend—
Let me tell you a story
that speaks
from the center of the soul.

Long ago,
a king walked the earth—
a man of power,
both worldly and divine.

One day,
he rode out hunting
with his noble companions,
when fate brought him
to a different kind of prey.

There,
on the open road,
he saw a maiden—
and in a single glance,
his soul was undone.

The bird of his spirit
beat its wings in longing,
restless in the cage
of his royal chest.

He bought her with gold—
thinking love
could be owned.

But soon,
by Divine decree,

she fell sick.

Like a man
who finds a saddle
just as the wolf steals his donkey—

Or a thirsty one
who finds the water,
only to watch
the pitcher break.

The Healers Are Summoned

The king,
distraught,
gathered every healer,
every sage from near and far.

"My life," he said,
"means nothing—
for she is
the life within my life."

"I bleed," he said,
"and she is
my only cure."

"Whoever heals her,
shall take my treasures—
my pearls,
great and small."

They stood before him,
confident,
proud.

"We will risk our lives,"
they said,
"and offer
all we know."

"Each one of us," they claimed,
"is a Messiah to the world.
We hold
the medicine for every pain."

When Pride Speaks First

But none among them said,
If God wills.
So God
unveiled the truth—
the weakness
hidden beneath their words.

For it is not enough
to speak submission,
if the heart
is hard.

There are those
who never say the words,
but their souls
are surrendered
deep within.

Failure Upon Failure

The more they tried,
the worse she became.

She withered
to the thinness of a hair.
And the king's eyes
flowed with blood-tears,
like a river.

Honey became bile.
Almond oil
only increased the heat.

Water
fed the flame,
like oil poured on fire.

The King Turns to God

When at last he saw
there was no cure,
the king ran
barefoot to the mosque.

He entered alone,
fell before the niche—
and soaked
the prayer-mat with his weeping.

When from the flood of
annihilation,
the ecstasy of faná,
he returned to himself,
he lifted his face
in praise.

"O You," he said,
"whose smallest gift
is a kingdom—

what can I say,
when You know
what hides
within the heart?"

"O our final refuge
in every despair,
we confess—
we have strayed from the Way
again."

"And yet,
You told us—
Though I know your secret,
speak it aloud,
show it in your asking."

A Sea Begins to Stir

When he cried
from the depths
of his soul,

the sea of Divine Mercy
began to stir.

Sleep overcame him
as he wept,
and he dreamed
of an old man,
bright with unseen light.

A Stranger Will Come

"Good news, O king,"
the old one said,
"Your prayer
has been answered."

"Tomorrow,
a stranger will arrive.
Know him—
he is from me."

"He is a true healer,
his hands carry
the touch of God."

"His breath
is pure remedy.
In him,
you will see
the power of the One."

The Dream Comes True

When morning came,
the king stood
at his tower,
waiting.

And from afar,
a figure appeared—
like the new moon,
slender,
radiant,
almost unreal.

He was there,
and not there—
like a dream
made visible.

But even phantoms
shape the world.

Two Souls Meet

Peace and war
are spun
from these dreams.
So are shame
and pride.

But the dreams
that visit the saints
carry the fragrance
of Paradise.

The king
saw in the man's face
the same light

he had seen
in his dream.

He did not send guards
or servants—
he went himself,
to welcome the one
sent from the Unseen.

Their souls
were already
woven together,
threadless,
without seam.

"You were my true Beloved,"
said the king,
"not she.

But on this earth,
one deed
must lead to another."

"O soul like the Prophet,
while I—
am only like 'Umar—
let me serve you,
with all that I am."

When Discipline Is Lost

(Verses 78–92)

Summary

This passage opens with a heartfelt prayer: a plea for God's help in cultivating self-restraint, the soul's safeguard against the destruction caused by desire. Rumi then draws from sacred stories—first, the Bani-Israil who rejected the miraculous heavenly table because they craved for earthly flavours, and then the followers of Jesus, who failed to honour the divine feast that came in response to his intercession. In both stories, greed and irreverence led to the heavens closing.

Rumi highlights how even one undisciplined person can ignite turmoil in the world. The rejection of divine gifts due to base appetites becomes a metaphor for spiritual loss. The passage deepens with Sufi teachings: irreverence is not merely a personal failure—it disrupts cosmic harmony. Those who scorn the path

of the Divine Friend (God) are likened to spiritual bandits, and Rumi warns that such behaviour severs one from divine grace.

The final verses exalt adab—spiritual courtesy and discipline—as the force that brings light to the heavens and purity to angels. Without it, even radiant beings like the sun are dimmed, and the exalted, like Iblis (Satan), fall. Reverence, then, is not a gesture—it is the soul's orientation toward the Real.

This poem echoes Qur'anic themes and prophetic traditions. It is a reminder that true piety is not in outward ritual, but in inward submission, humility, and the deep honouring of Divine generosity. The Divine Table may descend, but only hearts refined by reverence will taste its secret sweetness.

Poem Verses

A prayer for restraint

O Lord,
Companion of the soul,
teach us the grace
of self-restraint.
Without it,
Your gifts slip through our hands
like water through broken clay.

The fire of one heart

One unruly soul
doesn't just harm itself—
it sets fire to the world.

Heaven once sent
a table of food,
pure and effortless,
no toil,
no trade.
It descended for the people of
Moses—
bread from the unseen,
a feast from the beyond.

But they cried,
"Where is our garlic?
Our lentils?"
Earthly tongues,
craving the dust.

And just like that,
the gates of Heaven
closed.

They were left to sow in dust,
to reap with scythes,

sweating beneath the sun
for what was once offered
without pain.

The broken table of Jesus

Again,
when Jesus prayed,
a heavenly spread
descended in love.
Golden trays,
the scent of mercy
in every dish.

But still—
those with greedy hearts
snatched like beggars,
as if the Lord's gift
was some wandering charity.

Jesus pleaded,
"This table is eternal—
it will not vanish."

But suspicion
is a form of disbelief.
Greed
at the feast of the King
is ingratitude.

So the table vanished.
The gate of mercy
closed
because of those
who could not bow
in reverence.

Consequences of irreverence

The skies
withhold their rain
when the poor are forgotten.
Plagues rise
where lust is unleashed.

Every sorrow,
every shadow
falling across your path
is born
from turning your back
on holiness.

To walk the path of the Friend
without awe
is to rob travelers
and call it freedom.

True discipline
lit the stars.
It made the angels
pure.

But the proud—
like Iblīs—
are cast down
by one moment

of arrogance.

Even the sun
was veiled
by irreverence.

A Light Long Awaited

(Verses 93–143)

Summary

This mystical episode opens with the long-awaited arrival of a divine healer, foretold in the king's dream, who is received not just as a guest, but as a sacred answer, a messenger from the unseen. The king recognizes in him a source of joy, a solution to a sorrow he cannot yet name.

The physician is brought to a pale, ailing girl. Outwardly, she is sick, but the physician sees what others missed: her body is whole, but her heart is lovesick. This moment reveals Rumi's deeper insight—true pain often lies not in the flesh but in the soul. The story becomes a mirror for our own concealed wounds, our unseen longings.

Then Rumi turns from story to spiritual reflection. Love, he says, cannot be explained. The intellect shatters trying. The sun is its proof—look at it. Likewise, Divine Love reveals itself in the heart, not in logic—even the pen breaks at the threshold of Love's mystery.

The final section reflects Rumi's humility before his master Shams of Tabriz. His soul longs to speak of the Friend, but he hesitates—how can one describe the sun without being consumed by it? He hints that the greatest truths must sometimes be hidden in parables, veiled in story, for the listener's sake. For Love is fire, and only a heart softened by yearning can receive its flame without burning away.

This tale is both parable and unveiling. It calls us to recognize when pain hides longing, when sickness is a sign of love, and when silence says more than speech. It urges us to trust the wisdom in stories—and to seek the Beloved not just in words, but within the ache of our hearts.

Poem Verses

The King Meets the Divine Physician

He opened his arms,
and pulled the stranger close—
heart to heart,
soul to soul.
He welcomed him
like one greets love itself,
with the kiss of reverence
upon hand and brow,
his voice trembling with joy
as he asked:

Where have you come from?
What paths brought you here?

He led him up to the royal seat,
saying softly,
"At last—
through patience,
I have found my hidden treasure."

"O gift from God," he said,
"you are the shield
between me and sorrow—
you are the living meaning
of the Prophet's words:
'Patience unlocks joy.'

Your face—
it answers questions
before they're spoken.
With you,
knotted troubles unravel
without a single word.

You understand
what hearts barely dare to feel.
You offer your hand
to those stuck deep
in the mire of this world.

Welcome,
O Chosen One,
Spirit-approved—
if you vanished,
Fate would fall upon us like a
blade,
and the palace
would become a prison."

"You are a refuge for the people.
Whoever turns from you
is lost."
(He paused —)
"Unless... unless they return in
time..."

A Hidden Illness

When the gathering was complete,
and the feast of souls was over,
the king took his hand
and led him deeper—
to the chamber of veils,
where the sick girl lay.

There, in quiet tones,
he shared the whole tale—
her illness, her fading,
her despair.
He placed the physician gently
at her side.

With practiced eye
and tender hand,
he studied her face,
her pulse,
her urine—
listened to symptoms,
to deeper echoes
beneath the surface of her pain.

He said,
"These remedies have failed.
They've done more harm than
healing.
Those who treated her
never looked within."

Heartsickness

"I seek refuge in God
from their inventions,"
he whispered.

He saw the root of her pain,
but told the king nothing.
He kept her secret.

It was not bile—
neither black nor yellow—
that burned her from within.
Just as smoke reveals
the scent of wood,
her grief
revealed the shape of love.

Her body was whole—
but her heart was broken.
She was in love.

Love's Secret Path

There is no illness
like love's illness.
The wound of longing
is unlike all others.

Love is
the astrolabe
of Divine mysteries.
Whether it comes
from earth or heaven,
it always leads
beyond.

Whatever I say
to explain Love,
when I reach Love itself—
I fall silent.

Words may explain,
but the tongue-less
speak more truly.
The pen,
eager to write,
splits itself
as it reaches Love.

Even reason,
sturdy mule,
sinks to its knees
in this flood.
Only Love
can explain
the lover's state.

The Sun Speaks for Itself

If you seek proof of the sun—
look at the sun.
Do not turn away
to chase its shadow.

The shadow may hint at it,
but the sun
pours light
from moment to moment.

The shadow
may lull you

into sleep,
but when that sun rises—
even the moon
splits in shame.

There is nothing
more wondrous
in this world
than the sun—
except
the Sun of Spirit,
which knows no dawn or dusk.

No image,
no thought
can contain Him.
When Shams of Tabriz
was made known to us,
the sun
of the fourth heaven
hid its face.

A Friend Beyond Praise

Now that his name
has come to my lips,
my soul tugs at my robe—
like Jacob
catching the scent
of Joseph's shirt.

It pleads:
"Speak of the sweetness
we once knew—
make the heavens rejoice,
let spirit and eye
expand a hundredfold."

I replied,
"How can I speak?
I am no longer
myself.
I have passed away
into the Friend."

To speak now,
to boast—
would be unseemly.
What can I say
when not a single vein
in me
remains aware?

"Let it wait," I said,
"till another day."
But he cried:
"No! Feed me now!
Time is a cutting blade—
the Sufi lives
in this moment.
What is tomorrow
but a mirage?"

Secrets in Stories

I said,

"Let the secret
stay hidden.
Let it be heard
through the tales I tell."

He begged:
"No veils, no riddles.
Tell it plainly.
Speak to me nakedly.
I am as I sleep
with the One I love—
unclothed."

I said:
"If the Beloved
were to appear
without a veil,
you would vanish—
your heart,
your body,
your very self
would burn."

So ask wisely—
a straw
cannot carry a mountain.

If the sun
were to draw near,
everything would be reduced
to ash.

Let that be enough.
The mystery has no end.
Let us return
to where we began.

Let us finish
the tale.

Where the Pain is Hidden

(Verses 144–168)

Summary

In this subtle and intimate moment from Rumi's Masnavi, a saintly physician is summoned to diagnose the illness of a lovesick handmaiden. Rather than offering a quick remedy or a physical cure, he asks the king for privacy, knowing that the soul's pain must be uncovered gently, in silence and trust. The healer begins with tender questions, not about the body, but about belonging, memory, and connection. His fingers rest on her pulse, listening not only with his ears, but with the knowing heart of a spiritual master.

This is no ordinary diagnosis. Rumi compares it to finding a thorn buried in the foot—delicate and complex. But a thorn lodged in the heart is even harder to

find, and only a person of wisdom and insight can uncover it without causing more harm.

As the girl speaks, the physician watches her pulse. Her body reveals the truth even when her words remain composed. Town after town leaves her unmoved—until he names Samarqand. Her pulse quickens, her face flushes with colour, and the secret is revealed: her suffering is not from illness, but separation—from a beloved goldsmith in that distant city.

The passage is a profound metaphor for the Sufi way of diagnosing the soul's ailments. The goldsmith—a recurring symbol in Rumi—represents the Beloved, the Source of all longing. The physician mirrors the Sufi guide, who seeks the soul's pain not through judgment, but through sacred listening. It is a lesson in tenderness, discernment, and the art of uncovering the heart's most profound truth—not through force, but through presence.

In the Sufi path, true healing begins when the thorn is named and touched—when longing is seen not as madness, but as the sign of love.

Poem Verses

The Thorn Buried Deep Within

"Empty the room,"
he said to the king.
"Let every ear
—kin and stranger alike—
be far from these walls,

That I may speak
gently,
alone,
with the one who suffers."

And so,
the house was cleared.
Only he
and the girl
remained.

In a voice as soft as breath,
he asked:
"Where are you from, beloved?
For each land has its own healing.
And who in that place
was close to your heart?
To what—
or whom—

do you belong?"

He laid his hand upon her pulse,
and with each beat,
he softly questioned
the sorrows of her fate,
the turning of the heavens,
one by one.

Then,
like one searching for a thorn
buried in the flesh,
he began his work—

You know how it is
when a thorn lodges deep in your
foot—
You bend,
you squint,
you probe with a needle,
you moisten the skin with your
lips,
searching...

But this—
this is harder:
How to find
the thorn
in the heart?

If everyone could see
where such pain is lodged,
would grief ever
overtake
a soul?

But someone stabs
a thorn
beneath a donkey's tail—
the poor beast thrashes,
kicking wildly.

And all it does
is drive the thorn
in deeper.

It takes a wise hand
to draw it out.

The donkey, maddened by pain,
lashes out,
striking at everything.
But none of that heals—

Only the touch
of a skilled healer,
testing one place,
then another,
patiently listening,
waiting...

The Pulse Tells the Story

So he asked the girl
about her home,

her people,
her past—
but not with accusation.
He drew out her memories
in stories.

As she spoke,
he stayed close to her pulse,
watching—
for a name
that would wake her blood,
for a place
that would stir her soul.

He named the towns
she had passed through,
one by one.

"After you left your home,"
he asked,
"where did you stay?"

She answered calmly—
her voice unchanged,
her face still,
her pulse quiet.

Town after town,
house after house—
memories spilled like water,
but her pulse remained a still pond.

Until—
he spoke
the name of Samarqand—
that city
as sweet as sugar.

Then—
her pulse leapt.
Her face turned
first red,
then pale.

She had been parted
from a man
of Samarqand—
a goldsmith.

The Secret Beneath the Skin

(Verses 169–201)

Summary

This tale gently unveils the healing that can only happen when love's true cause is known. A young girl, sick with longing, confesses the secret of her soul—she burns not from illness, but from desire for a man, a goldsmith from a distant town. The physician, a saint in disguise, discerns her hidden ailment and sets in motion a plan that draws the beloved to her, with the king's aid and subtle deception.

But the more profound wisdom flows beneath the story's surface. The saint teaches her—and us—that the secret held in silence has power. That desire, when buried in the soil of the heart like a seed, blossoms more surely. He invokes the prophetic wisdom that concealment of longing hastens its fulfillment, just as

seeds in darkness become gardens, and metals grow pure in the hidden chambers of the earth.

The tale also cautions against false promises, the difference between noble words that soothe the soul and shallow ones that steal peace. The goldsmith's journey is a parable of destiny: lured by wealth, unaware he is stepping into a trap shaped by Divine will, not malice. He comes smiling, dressed for glory, yet riding toward his undoing, though in doing so, he becomes the healing she needs.

This story weaves themes of longing, spiritual discernment, Divine orchestration, and the mystery of hidden intentions. It reminds us that not all illnesses are physical, and not all cures come from medicine. Sometimes, it is the aching love we dare not speak that must be seen, named, and drawn into the light—not to shame us, but to save us.

Poem Verses

The Physician Discerns the Heart

When the healer heard her
trembling truth,
he traced the sorrow
to its hidden root.

"Where does he pass?" he gently
asked—
"Across the bridge,
on Ghatafar Street,"
she whispered, like a breeze
breaking under burden.

The doctor smiled,
"I know now what wounds you.
I'll use the alchemy of love
to set you free.

Be at ease,
let your fears dissolve—
I will be as rain
to your burning meadow."

"Let me carry your worry," he said,
"for I am more tender
than a hundred fathers."

"But hush—
share not this secret with any soul,
not even if a king
should beg for your truth."

The Secret and the Seed

"When your heart becomes
a grave for your secret,
its wish will bloom
more swiftly."

The Prophet said—
"Whoever buries their longing
deep,
shall reach its light
sooner."

Like seeds in the earth,
hidden in darkness,
rise into green
by the mystery within.

Even silver and gold—
unseen in their mines—
grow richer
by being veiled.

So her fear melted
beneath his words,
and in their warmth
her illness began to soften.

True and False Promises

Some promises
are lanterns of the heart,
others, shadows
that haunt the soul.

The pledge of the noble—
pure as minted coin.
The vow of the low—
a wound dressed in honey.

The Hidden Cure

Then the saint
went quietly to the king,
and shared a sliver
of what had been revealed.

"The only way," he said,
"is to bring him here—
summon the goldsmith,
draw him with gifts
and robes of honor."

So the king dispatched
his finest messengers,
honest and wise,
to Samarcand.

The Baited Journey

There, they found him—
graceful and skilled,
his craft praised in every city.

"O master of metals,
the king calls you near—
come with us,
wear this robe of light,
take these treasures."

The gold shimmered,
and his heart grew wide—
he left his home,
his children,
and stepped into fate,
dreaming of glory,
unaware—
he was walking into the fire
of a king's design.

Mounted on a noble steed,
he rode like the wind,
the robe that clothed him
was stitched with death.

Foolish joy
danced in his chest—
even ʻAzra'il,
the Angel of Death,
smiled: "Go on...
your crown awaits."

The King's Trap

When the traveler arrived,
the saint led him gently
to the king's court.

They welcomed him
with soft hands,
and dressed him in titles—
burning him sweetly
on the candle of royal grace.

The king beheld him
with flattering eyes,
and gave him gold
from his own treasure vault.

Then the saint spoke—
"O sultan,
give this man
the moon-faced girl—
let their union
quench the fire
that consumes her."

The king agreed.
He wedded them,
bound the lovers
in silk and light.

For six months,
they drank from each other
the nectar of longing,
until her body healed,
and the fire within
was gone.

What Love Cannot Endure

(Verses 202–221)

Summary

This parable is a poignant reflection on the nature of superficial love and the painful consequences of attachment to appearances. A young woman falls in love with a man for his beauty, but when illness drains that beauty from his body, her affection vanishes. His sorrow is not merely for lost love, but for the deeper tragedy of being loved for what is transient and not for his essence.

He likens himself to hunted creatures—musk deer, fox, elephant—each slain for an outer treasure while their true being is ignored. Rumi reveals the cosmic justice at work: the shadow one casts through action will return to them, like an echo on the mountain.

The story climaxes in spiritual counsel: do not love the perishable, for all such love ends in grief. Even the deepest passion fades when its object perishes. But Divine love, the love of al-Ḥayy, the Ever-Living, is fresh in every moment, endlessly renewing. It is this love that empowered the prophets and saints. To love God is to drink from the fountain that grants eternal life.

This passage invites the reader to turn from fleeting infatuation toward the living Source, where love is not diminished by age or death, but grows ever brighter.

Poem Verses

The Mirror Turns

He drank the potion—
and day by day,
his light diminished
in her eyes.

As sickness stole
the bloom from his face,
her soul turned cold
to his wasting frame.

What once was beauty
became a stranger,
and her heart
no longer stirred.

Fleeting Charms

Love built
on color and skin
was never truly love—
it fades,
it shames.

Had he been born
entirely broken,
perhaps
he would not have fallen
from her grace.

Tears streamed—
his eyes became rivers,
his once-lovely face
a wound against his life.

Splendor as Snare

The peacock dies
by its own glory.
How many kings
have fallen
for what shone too brightly?

He cried:
"I am the musk deer,
hunted for my scent—
my innocence shed
for fragrance alone.

I am the fox,
stripped of life
for the softness of my pelt.

I am the elephant,
bled dry
for the ivory in my bones."

The Blood Remains

He who kills for shadow,
not essence,
knows not
that sacred blood
never sleeps.

Today,
the weight of it is mine.
Tomorrow,
it will fall
upon him.

Even the wall,
casting a long shadow,
must see that shadow
return.

The Mountain Echo

This world is a mountain,
your deeds
are the shouts.

What you cry
returns to you
as echo.

With these words,
he breathed his last
and sank beneath the earth.

Her heart,
freed from love
and its pain,
knew rest—
for love of the dead
does not endure.

Only the living
stir the soul
with ever-new delight.

Choose the Living One

Choose love
that never dies—
the One who pours
the wine of life.

Love Him,
from whom

all prophets
drew their glory.

Do not say,
"I am unworthy
to enter the King's court."

The doors of the Generous
are not hard to approach.

The Mercy Hidden in the Blade

(Verses 222–246)

Summary

This passage reveals a paradoxical mercy hidden within an act of apparent cruelty. Rumi tells of a physician who kills a man, not from desire or command of a worldly king, but by Divine inspiration. Like Khidr in the Qur'an, who killed a child as part of a greater Divine plan unseen to Moses, this doctor is not moved by ego or lust, but by the whisper of God. His hand becomes an instrument of the Divine Will.

The poem urges us to see beyond appearances. What seems like violence may be purification, like a furnace that burns to remove dross from silver. The king's act, misunderstood by the worldly-minded, is likened to a red rose mistaken for

blood. Rumi insists: don't call him mad—he's drunk with Divine wisdom. Don't call it murder—it is mercy in disguise.

We are reminded that true lovers of God give themselves willingly, like Isma'il to Abraham's knife, and that pain sent by God is always for healing. Just as a child weeps at the barber's blade while the mother rejoices, so too the soul may grieve without seeing the joy that lies ahead.

The deeper lesson is spiritual trust (tawakkul). Those close to God may act in ways incomprehensible to reason, but they do so with the permission and presence of the Divine. Faith means surrendering even one's understanding, and remembering that what God takes away, He only takes to give something greater in return.

Poem Verses

A whisper about Divine command, not desire

He didn't kill from greed or fear.
Not to please the king,
not to gain reward.
The doctor's hand moved
only when God whispered—
only when the Unseen gave the
command.

Like Khidr,
who pierced the child's throat
at the edge of Divine wisdom—
a mystery
that ordinary minds
cannot bear.

The Friend who listens deeply
to God's voice within—
his every act
is already Truth.

If such a one slays,
he gives life, not death.
His hand is God's hand.
To fall beneath his blade
is to be chosen
like Isma'il,
who smiled
and offered his neck
to Abraham's knife.

Give up your soul
the way he did—

willing, laughing.
Then you too
will rise laughing
into eternity,
pure as the soul of Ahmad
resting in the One.

Lovers
drink the wine of ecstasy
as the Beloved slays them,
with His own hand.

Not Lust, But Purification

This was no lustful murder.
Put away such thoughts.
Do not stain the sacred
with your own suspicion.

In purity,
how could dross
remain in the fire?

This was a fire made for silver—
a furnace to draw out the scum,
to refine
what is true.

When you test gold and dross,
you must boil it—
watch the scum
rise to the surface.

If this act came not from God,
he'd have been no king,
but a dog
tearing flesh.
Instead, he was free
of greed and rage.
His act
was clothed in ugliness,
but at its heart,
it was good.

Hidden Goodness

Like Khidr's hole
in the bottom of the boat—
a hundred wisdoms
lay beneath it.

Even Moses,
with all his light,
could not see
the beauty beneath
that wreckage.
Don't try to fly
without wings.

That king's act
was a red rose.
Don't call it blood.

He was drunk
with Divine Reason.
Don't call him mad.

If he had sought
to kill the faithful,
I would not have spoken his name
with reverence.
God is my witness.

What Looks Like Wrath

He was God's chosen,
awake and aware.

If such a king
draws blood—
he is leading that soul
into glory.

Unless that blow
was a mercy
in disguise,
why would
God's Infinite Compassion
have allowed it?

The child cries
at the barber's blade,
but the mother smiles—
she knows
the pain
is healing.

He takes
half a life—
and returns
a hundred more.

He gives
what your mind
can't yet imagine.

You judge
through your own
small fears,
but you've strayed far
from the path.

Look again.

When Appearances Deceive the Heart

(Verses 247–284)

Summary

This story begins as a charming parable of a talking parrot, entrusted with a merchant's shop. One day, in mischief or accident, the bird spills costly rose-oil. The merchant, in a moment of rage, strikes it and leaves it bald and silent. Later, the bird suddenly mocks a bald dervish walking by, assuming he, too, must have spilled the oil and been punished. Laughter follows.

But Rumi takes this humorous moment and turns it inward, asking us to see how often we mistake appearances for essence. Like the parrot, we judge the saints and lovers of God by external traits, unaware of their radiant inner states. Rumi calls out the arrogance of those who compare themselves to prophets and

saints, failing to see the vast difference between Divine intimacy and worldly imitation.

He draws metaphors from nature: bees and hornets, deer and musk, reeds and water—all appearing alike but inwardly different. This is the soul's lesson: the outer can deceive, but only spiritual taste reveals the real.

The poem also warns against the apish imitator—the one who mimics holy actions without surrendering to God. Rumi, faithful to Sufi metaphysics, insists on sincerity (ikhlāṣ), true knowledge (maʿrifa), and the subtle perception (dhawq) that only comes from the purified heart. The entire tale is a playful veil over profound spiritual truth: do not assume resemblance equals reality. What is of God carries light. What is not, crumbles into dust.

Poem Verses

The Parrot and the Greengrocer

A greengrocer kept
a bright green parrot—
sweet-voiced,
a mimic of human words,
clever in speech,
charming in chatter,
guardian of the shop
when the master stepped away.

One day, it leapt
from its usual perch
and, in wild flight,
shattered bottles
of precious rose-oil.

The merchant returned,
took his seat,
and saw the mess—
his bench soaked in oil,
his robes stained with perfume.
Anger flared.

He struck the parrot
a sharp blow on the head.
Feathers fell.
A bald spot bloomed
where once there was pride.

For days,
the parrot was silent,
its voice locked away.
The merchant mourned,
beard in hand,

sighing deep into his sorrow.

"Oh, the sun of my shop
has sunk behind clouds!
If only I'd lost my hand
before striking
that sweet-tongued soul!"

He gave alms to dervishes,
seeking a blessing,
a cure for the silence.

Three days passed.
The merchant sat,
distraught and full of grief,
offering every wonder
to coax the bird to speak.

Then—

a bald-headed dervish,
cloaked in rough wool,
walked past.

The parrot shrieked,
pointed with its beak,
and mocked:

"Hey, baldy!
Did you break the oil bottles too?"

The crowd laughed—
the parrot,
confusing
outward form
with inner truth.

Mistaking Saints for Ourselves

Don't measure holy ones
by your own scale.
Lion and milk
share a name in script—
but not in nature.

This is the world's mistake—
to be blind to God's Abdál, the
hidden saints,
and to see them as mere men.
"We eat, they eat.
We sleep, so do they,"
they say.

But between the two
stretches an eternal chasm.
The hornet stings;
the bee offers honey.
Both drink from the same place.

Deer graze the same grass—
from one comes dung,
from the other—musk.

Reeds drink
from the same stream—

one turns empty,
the other, sweet.

In a thousand such likenesses,
see that the distance between them
is a journey of seventy years.

One soul devours,
grows heavy with envy.
Another eats,
and becomes
the very light of God.

One is earth,
salty and barren.
Another,
pure soil
where angels tread.

Only the Heart Knows

To look alike—
bitter and sweet waters
both shimmer clear—
means nothing.

Only one
with the taste of truth
can tell them apart.

Magic mimics
the prophet's miracle—
but one draws God's curse,
the other, His mercy.

Moses' staff
and the staffs of the magicians—
both rose,
but only his
carried Divine command.

The unbeliever who contends with
the holy
has the nature of an ape.
Whatever he sees a man do,
the ape copies it in that moment,
thinking, "I have acted just like
him,"
but how can the fool know the
difference?
This one acts by the command of
God;
that one, from apish rivalry.

Throw dust on the faces
of such quarrelsome imitators!

The Hidden Touchstone of Truth

(Verses 285–323)

Summary

This passage examines the distinction between outward forms of piety and inner spiritual reality. Rumi contrasts the sincere believer with the hypocrite—both may pray, fast, and give alms, but their inner intentions pull them in opposite directions. The soul of the true believer resonates with its divine name, while the hypocrite is only animated by appearance and ego.

The poem also explores the idea that names carry more than sounds—they have spiritual meanings that affect the soul. The metaphor of letters as vessels and meanings as the water inside leads to a broader reflection on how only God can truly reveal the essence of things. He is the source of all meaning, and to discern truth from falsehood, one must receive the divine touchstone.

Rumi then transitions into the theme of spiritual transformation. True growth often requires the destruction of pride, ego, and worldly attachments, allowing for a deeper rebuilding to occur. Just as the riverbed must be cleared to flow again, or a fortress taken to rebuild stronger, the soul, too, must be stripped down to its essence to rise anew.

He ends by cautioning us to look beyond appearances. Devils may wear holy faces, and true saints may be hidden from view. The spiritual path is a place of bewilderment, not confusion, but the awe-filled wonder of one drawn ever closer to the Divine.

Poem Verses

Veils of Devotion

That hypocrite bends beside the devout
not to pray,
but to provoke—
his motions in prayer
are acts of rivalry,
not remembrance.

In fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage,
he joins the faithful
only to wrestle,
not to worship.
But in the end,
it is the true lover who triumphs—
the mask falls,
and the hypocrite's ruin is unveiled
in the Hereafter.

They may seem
to play the same game,
yet in spirit,
they are as far apart
as Rayy from Merv.
Each walks toward
his own destiny,
drawn by the gravity
of his soul's true name.

The Soul's True Name

Call him believer—
his heart lifts in joy.
Say hypocrite—
he burns with rage.
One name is fragrant,
the other—putrid.

Mīm, wāw, mīm, nūn—

these letters do not make a man.
A name alone carries no holiness.
But name and soul
are stitched in secret.

If you name the friend hypocrite,
his heart aches,
like a sting from a hidden scorpion.
Is this name not forged in Hell?
Then why its taste—
pure fire?

Meanings Beyond Letters

The vileness lies not
in the shape of a word,
just as bitterness
does not dwell
in the jug that holds seawater.

Letters are vessels.
The meaning,
like water,
lives within.
But the sea of meanings—
that belongs to God alone,
the Keeper of the Mother of the
Book.

There are two oceans here:
bitter and sweet.
God has placed a hidden barrier
between them—
they do not mingle.

Yet both
spring from one Source.
So leave the waves behind—
go to the Source.

The Inner Touchstone

Without a divine touchstone,
how will you ever know
pure gold from alloy?
Your own eye will deceive you.

But if God places that touchstone
deep in your soul,
you will know—
you will see through illusion.

Like a man who spits out
a foul morsel
without hesitation,
your soul will recoil from
falsehood.

Among a thousand sweet morsels,
one bitter piece
betrays itself
to the living tongue.

Two Ladders

The worldly senses—
they lift you only to this world.

But the senses of faith
lead to Heaven.

Seek health for the body
from physicians.
Seek health of the soul
from the Beloved.

The soul's healing
comes not from strength,
but from the ruin
of the body's pride.

Destruction for Resurrection

The path of spirit
is a fire
that destroys,
then rebuilds
something eternal.

It tears down the house—
only to uncover
the treasure buried beneath.
With that treasure,
it builds anew.

It dries up the river,
cleanses its bed,
then sends pure water
to flow again.

It breaks the skin
to draw out the iron—
then lets
a new skin grow.

It razes the fortress
held by the enemy
and raises in its place
a hundred strongholds.

The Work of the Hidden Hand

Who can speak
of His endless actions?
One day,
they seem like mercy.
Another—like wrath.

The work of religion
is bewilderment,
but not the bewilderment
that turns its back on God.

No—
the kind that drowns
in rapture,
the soul intoxicated
by the Beloved.

One face turns to the Self.
The other—
to the One
who made the Self.

The Faces We Must Read

Look closely
at every face.
Keep watch—
the saints may be hidden
in beggars' clothes.

Many devils
wear the face of Adam.
Not every hand
is fit for yours.

The hunter's whistle
mimics the song
of the bird—
so the bird flies down
into the trap.

The Masks of the World

The deeds of holy ones
shine with light.
The acts of the false
reek of deception.

Some sew a lion
from wool
to beg coins.

They name a liar
with the name Ahmad,
but the title of Liar
clings to Musaylima.

And Muhammad?
He is crowned
as the wise—Ulū 'l-albāb.

The wine of God,
its final note
is musk.

Other wine?
It ends in stench,
in torment.

The Squint-Eyed King

(Verses 324–337)

Summary

This parable opens with the tale of a Jewish king in the era of Jesus who, out of religious bigotry, persecuted and killed many Christians. Though Moses and Jesus were united in spirit—mirror flames of Divine guidance—the king saw them as divided. His spiritual blindness is likened to that of a squint-eyed pupil, who sees two bottles where there is only one. The teacher's remedy—smash the illusion—reveals the unity beneath duality.

This story is about Rumi's rebuke of sectarianism and religious fanaticism. The true enemy is not another path to God, but the inner blindness caused by anger, lust, and ego. These passions distort vision, cloaking virtue and truth in

shadow. Even those tasked with justice, like judges or kings, lose their way when their hearts are stained with self-interest.

Rumi's message is both mystical and moral: Divine unity underlies all true revelation. Jesus and Moses were not rivals, but reflections of the same Light. To divide them is to see with corrupted eyes. True seeing requires the purification of the heart. Only then can we behold the One in all prophets, and justice in the face of the oppressed.

This story is not merely historical—it is a mirror held to every age. For whenever we act in God's name while harming His beloveds, we too are squint-eyed, needing the bottle of illusion to be shattered.

Poem Verses

Where Union Was Torn

In the time of Jesus,
a Jewish king reigned—
enemy of the Christ,
a butcher of believers.

Though Jesus held the spirit of
Moses,
and Moses was the soul of Jesus,
this king, blinded by bigotry,
saw only separation
where union glowed divine.

He split what God had joined,
slicing with the sword of dogma
those two radiant lights
as if they were foes.

A Parable of Vision

A master turned to a pupil
whose eyes looked two ways at
once.

"Go," he said,
"Bring the bottle from the room."

The squint-eyed one replied,
"Which one shall I bring?
There are two before me."

"There is only one,"
the master said gently.
"Leave off your double-seeing—
heal your gaze."

The student answered,
"Don't blame me."
"Break one of them,"
said the master.

He did,
and both were gone.
The bottle was always one—
but desire and anger
had split his vision.

When the Eye Is Veiled

Lust and rage
warp the soul's seeing,
twist it from truth,
veil it from justice.

Self-interest rises
like a smoke—
and the heart
can no longer see the real.

Even a judge,
if bribery stains his heart,
will not see
the difference
between oppressor
and the oppressed.

The king,
blinded by tribal hatred,
claimed he served Moses,
yet slaughtered
God's lovers.

He saw double—
saw his violence
as virtue.

And so,
thousands of innocent Christians
were slaughtered
beneath his crown of piety.

A Seed of Deception, Planted Deep

(Verses 338–362)

Summary

This chilling episode tells the tale of a vizier—cunning and corrupt—who devises a diabolical plan to deceive the Christians and lead them away from their faith. He convinces the king to mutilate him publicly, as if punishing a crime, then sends him into the Christian community as a false convert and martyr. Posing as one of them, the vizier proclaims love for Jesus and pretends persecution for his secret faith, all to gain trust and then mislead.

The vizier's strategy relies on spiritual disguise—he appears broken, a victim of injustice, but his heart remains a tool of deception. Rumi, through this parable, shows the subtlety of spiritual delusion, the danger of hypocrisy cloaked in piety, and the manipulative power of false charisma. The vizier weaponizes the

imagery of martyrdom, the language of faith, and the memory of sacred suffering—using even Jesus' name to seduce souls into error.

The tale warns the seeker: not all suffering is sincere. Not all claims to spiritual truth come from light. The vizier, with a broken body and a burning lie, becomes a test for those whose hearts are easily stirred by appearances, not essence.

Poem Verses

The Vizier's Plot

The king had a vizier—
a cunning soul, sharp-eyed,
his tricks could knot water,
his lies wore the veil of truth.

He whispered,
"The Christians hide among us,
their faith tucked deep beneath the surface.
Outwardly, they look like us—
but within, they burn with a different fire.

Don't kill them;
you won't catch the scent of their religion.
It's not musk, not aloeswood—
It's hidden, layered, sealed."

The king asked,
"What then? What cure for this deceit?
How shall I cleanse the earth
of every Christian soul—
open or veiled?"

A Cruel Masquerade

"O king," said the vizier,
"Then let this be our game:

Cut off my hands,
slice my ears,
break my nose by decree.

Hang me before the crowds,
in the place where four roads meet—
Let me be disgraced,
as if by justice,
and banish me to a far land.

There I will sow seeds of doubt,
turn hearts from faith,

with a story I will speak as if in tears…"

He Enters Their Circle

"I will say,
'I am one of you—
a Christian in secret.

God knows my hidden heart.
The king found out my truth,
and from bigotry,
he tried to end me.

I tried to pretend,
to blend,
but he saw through it all.

He said to me,
"Your words are like a needle in bread—
dangerous though soft.
There is a window between my soul
and yours.
Through it, I saw your hidden face."'"

False Martyrdom

"Had not the spirit of Jesus aided me,
I would've been ripped apart
like the Messiah among the Jews.
I would give my head for Jesus' sake—
not out of fear,
but from love.

I know his path deeply.
I feared his faith would vanish
among the ignorant.

Thanks be to God—
thanks be to Jesus—
now I walk among you
as a guide to truth.

I have shed Judaism like an old cloak.
I have fastened the Christian belt
around my waist.

This is the age of Jesus.
O seekers, come close—
Let me tell you the secrets of his way."

The Deception Begins

So the king
did all he'd asked.

The people watched,
stunned by such cruelty.

Then,

he was cast among the Christians—
and soon,
he began to preach.

The Secret Mouse in the Barn

(Verses 363–406)

Summary

This passage from the Masnavi warns of the seductive power of false religious leaders, symbolized by the deceitful vizier who pretends to be pious but is inwardly a snare. His spiritual disguise leads the people astray, like the Christians who mistook him for a holy vicar, while he was in truth the Antichrist.

Rumi uses this story to illustrate the deeper danger that lies within: the nafs, or selfish soul. It disguises itself even in acts of devotion. The Prophet's (PBUH) companions, we are told, weren't asking about surface sins—they saw how the ego invades even prayer.

The poem then turns inward, using the metaphor of a barn where spiritual work is gathered. A mouse, representing unconscious habits and inner

corruption, secretly steals it away. If we want our worship to bear fruit, we must first catch the mouse.

Rumi reminds us that only God saves us from the endless snares of this world. Each night, in sleep, He frees us from ourselves, showing us a taste of the gnostic's state—free from form, story, or grief.

Finally, the poem gestures toward the hidden saints—the awliyā'—whose outer sleep masks an inner wakefulness. They are with the Friend, but the veils on our eyes keep us from seeing them.

This is a teaching on inner vigilance: to awaken, purify, and protect the heart from both outer falsehood and inner theft. Divine love and sincerity, not appearances, mark the path home.

Poem Verses

The Vizier's Trap

They gathered, those Christian
souls,
drawn slowly into his lair—
where he whispered secrets,
gospel truths,
prayer rituals and priestly codes,
all under cloaks of piety.

Outwardly, a preacher of sacred
law.
Inwardly, a flute's hollow cry—
a trap laid in sweet sound.

Even the Prophet's closest friends
once came to him in quiet alarm:
"O Messenger of God," they asked,
"how the soul disguises itself—
how selfish aims hide
inside pure devotion."

They were not asking about outer
sins.
They saw, hair by hair,
the selfish soul
as clearly distinct
as a rose is from parsley.

Even the most scrupulous
Companions
trembled at this unveiling.

Snares of the Vizier

The Christians gave him their
hearts,
held him close,
believed he was Christ's own vicar.
But within—
he was the one-eyed Antichrist.

O God, hear the cry of the lost.
We are birds,
starving and greedy,
and the earth is filled with snares.

Each hour,
we fall again into new traps,
even when we soar like falcons,
like the mythical Símurgh.

You free us,
yet still we return to the bait.
O You,
without need,
yet always giving!

The Mouse That Steals

We store our harvest—
and then,
watch it vanish.
Why do we not consider—
why this loss?

A mouse has gnawed
its secret tunnel
into the heart of our barn.

O soul,
first deal with the mouse—
then gather your wheat
with passion.

Presence in Prayer

The Prophet said:
"No prayer is real
without presence—
without the heart fully here."

If no thief is hiding,
then where is the fruit
of forty years' devotion?

Where is today's sincerity?
Why does it not remain
in the barn of the heart?

So many sparks,
like stars,
have leapt from our iron deeds—
but a dark thief
puts his hand
on each light
and snuffs it out.

Divine Rescue Each Night

Yet when You are near,

no trap can harm us.

Every night,
You free our spirits
from the body's cage,
erase the tablets of worry,
let the soul rise
beyond law and story.

The prisoner forgets his prison,
the ruler his crown.

No grief,
no thought of gain.
No face, no name.

The State of the Gnostic

This is the ʻārif—
even when awake.
God said,
"You would think them awake,
though they sleep."

He is the pen
in the hand of God.
If you only see the pen,
you miss the hand.

Even the common folk,
in their sleep,
are taken to the same
desert of spirit—
unseen, unspoken.

One whistle—
and they return to the snare.

Morning's Summoning

Like Isráfīl's trumpet,
God calls them back
from spirit to form.
Gives body to the soul,
gives action to the body.

He tethers each soul,
so it returns
from the pasture of spirit
to bear the day's load.

Would that He kept us
like the People of the Cave,
like Noah in the ark—
safe from the flood
of waking thought.

Hidden Saints

Even now,
many sleepers lie beside you,
awake to God,
but hidden from your sight.

Their cave is within,
and the Friend
speaks with them.

But your eyes and ears
are sealed.
So what do you see?

A Glimpse Through Majnún's Eyes

(Verses 407–428)

Summary

In this mystical parable, the Caliph questions Laylá's beauty, unable to see what drove Majnún to madness. Laylá replies that only Majnún could see her true essence—a profound lesson in spiritual vision. The passage then shifts into a meditation on illusion and awakening: those who appear "awake" in the world are often most asleep to the Divine. The soul, distracted by fear, gain, and fantasy, loses touch with joy and the path to heaven.

Rumi weaves in the image of a dreamer seduced by phantoms and a fool chasing the shadow of a bird, illustrating how we mistake reflections for reality. Arrows shot at shadows only waste life's vital force. But then comes the guidance—the way out: God's shadow, embodied in the saint, offers true refuge.

These friends of God are not illusions but real manifestations of Divine light, described in Qur'anic language as God's extended shadow.

The poem closes by naming two radiant figures—Shams of Tabriz and Husām al-Dīn—as spiritual guides. Their presence is the bridge from illusion to truth, from the shadow-world to the feast of union with God. This passage is a luminous call to spiritual awakening: to look beyond surface forms, to recognize the saints, and to seek God through them, as Abraham once turned from setting stars toward the ever-rising sun of tawḥīd—the Oneness of God.

Poem Verses

The Caliph and Laylá

The Caliph looked at Laylá and said,
"Is it you who drove Majnún mad?
You're not more beautiful than the others—
I see no reason for such love."

Laylá smiled softly,
and answered,
"Be silent—
you are not Majnún."

When the Soul Sleeps

Those wide awake to the world
are deeply asleep
to the Real.

Their eyes may be open—
but their hearts
are sealed shut.

A soul not awakened by God
lives behind locked doors,
cut off from grace,
tossed between fear and profit,
fantasies and losses.

Joy fades.
Beauty vanishes.
The sky to which the soul might rise
is nowhere in sight.

The Spell of Illusion

The dreamer
believes every shadow is real,
dines with devils dressed as heavenly brides,
and wakes

spilled out,
ashamed.

The lover spent his seed
on a phantom,
and now sits
with a headache and a soiled bed,
mourning a vision
that never was.

Chasing Shadows

Look!
The bird soars in the sky,
but its shadow
runs along the earth.

A fool
runs after the shadow,
exhausting himself
chasing what can never be caught.

He shoots arrows at the dark,
wasting his quiver,
wasting his life.

All the while,
he never looks up.
He never sees
the real bird
flying overhead.

The Shadow of God

But when God's shadow nurses
you—
you're delivered
from every other shadow.

That shadow is not illusion,
but the shade of a saint—
dead to the world,
alive through God.

Cling to their cloak.
Don't hesitate.
Their path
is the path to salvation
at the end of time.

The Saints: God's Cooling Shade

"Have you not seen how He
stretches the shadow?"
That shadow
is the presence of the saints—
the cool shade beneath which
the light of God
shines clearer.

Without them,
you will be lost
in this valley of confusion.

Say with Abraham,
"I do not love what sets."

Seek the sun
from within the shadow.
Take the hand
of the King of Light—
Shams of Tabriz.

If you don't know the way
to this wedding feast,
ask Husām al-Dīn,
the Radiance of Truth.

When Envy Finds a Home

(Verses 429–454)

Summary

In this powerful story, Rūmī asks us to feel the weight of a shadow that can fall upon any heart: envy. He traces this poison back to its first source, the arrogance of Iblis, who turned from the light because he could not celebrate it in another.

To illustrate how this spiritual sickness operates, we encounter a vizier who appears to be a man of God. His words are as sweet as almond cakes, his guidance as bright as silver. Yet for those with a heart that can truly taste and see, a hidden bitterness and a dark stain lie beneath his beautiful speech. He is the voice of the ambitious self that masquerades as holy, dazzling his followers only to blind them.

Against this tale of deception, Rūmī reminds us that our own heart is meant to be God's house. Though veiled in earthly clay, it is made to hold a divine light. The path to cleansing it of envy's shadow is through profound humility, becoming like dust at the feet of those who truly see, and learning to recognize the true scent of the sacred. This tale is an invitation to look past the world's glittering surfaces and listen to the quiet truth within.

Poem Verses

The Weight of Iblis's Breath

If on this path
envy clutches your throat—
know it belongs to Iblis,
who drowned in its venom.

He scorned Adam from envy,
waged war on joy itself.
No passage is steeper,
no burden heavier on the soul.

Blessed is the one
not shadowed by this companion.
This body—
it is the house where envy makes its nest.
Yet God shaped it
with a purity beyond earth's dust.

Did He not say—
"Cleanse My house, you two"?
Not of brick and wood,
but of soul and self.
For the heart,
though veiled in clay,
holds the light of Heaven.

The Black Stain of Envy

If you plant envy
in the soil of an unenvying soul,
your heart will bear
a blackened harvest.

Fall low—
be dust beneath the feet
of God's beloved ones.
Scatter earth over envy's head,
as we do in prayerful defiance.

The Vizier's Fall

The vizier—
his root was envy,
and from that fire,
he burned his own ears and nose.

He wagered his flesh
hoping his sting
would poison
the poor in faith.

But one who scars himself
from envy's madness
blinds his senses,
loses scent and sound—
spiritually maimed.

The Scent of the Spirit

The nose—
it seeks scent
and follows fragrance
to its hidden source.

And what is scent?
It is the trace of the sacred.

But if you find it
and offer no thanks,
ingratitude will devour your gift—
you lose the very sense
that led you to truth.

So give thanks,
and serve those who remember.
Be dead in their presence,
still, like clay
before the potter's hands.

Do not, like the vizier,
become a thief of souls—
diverting the hearts
from sacred prayer.

Sugar Laced with Poison

That vizier—
a master of deceit—
appeared a sage,
a guide,
a man of God.

But in the almond cakes
he served the people,
he hid garlic's bitterness.

The Bitter Beneath the Sweet

Some,
blessed with hearts that discern,
tasted his sweetness
but also his sting.

He spoke pious words,
"Strive on the Path,"
but the soul heeded another voice:
"Sleep,
be lax,
turn away."

The Fire Behind the Flame

Outwardly,
his words shone silver,

but what they touched
turned black.

Even fire—
red-faced with pride—
blackens all it burns.

Lightning dazzles the eye,
yet blinds what it strikes.

The Collar of Words

Those without discernment
wore his words like collars—
shackles mistaken for jewelry.

For six long years
he replaced the king
and became
a refuge for Jesus's followers.

They gave him
their faith,
their hearts.
His word was their law.
They would die for him.

Twelve Roads, One Lost Path

(Verses 455–499)

Summary

In this tale from Rumi's Masnavi, the king secretly communicates with a dark-hearted vizier who is working to undermine the faith of Jesus (peace be upon him). The vizier's strategy is subtle yet devastating. He writes twelve different gospels, each tailored to mislead a different group of followers. Each gospel contradicts the others—one praises asceticism, another denies its value; one exalts trust in God, another demands service instead. Some teach total renunciation, others validate worldly ease. By dividing and confusing the people, he sows spiritual chaos.

The twelve tribes of the Christians—symbolic of human tendencies to factionalize truth—each latch onto a different path, drawn more by self-interest

than love of God. The vizier exploits this, crafting doctrines that sound wise but are riddled with contradiction. This part of the Masnavi serves as a metaphor for religious misguidance, the manipulation of sacred teachings, and the fragility of human certainty without divine guidance.

The key symbols here include the twelve contradictory scrolls, which represent fragmented and ego-driven interpretations of revelation, and the vizier, a symbol of the lower self or Iblis-like cunning that corrupts divine truth with clever lies. The deeper teaching is this: only when one transcends these contradictions and finds the core of unity beyond duality—beyond "asceticism" or "generosity," "weakness" or "strength"—can one walk the true path of tawḥīd, the Oneness of God.

This is not just a cautionary tale. It is a spiritual mirror, asking each of us: Which scroll are you following? And who wrote it in your heart?

Poem Verses

The King's Secret Letter

A whisper passed
between the King and his vizier—
silent comfort,
a veiled message of longing.

"O blessed soul,"
the King wrote,
"the hour has come—
ease my restless heart."

The vizier replied:
"Behold, my King,
I am sowing seeds
to unravel the faith of Jesus."

The Division of the Tribes

There were twelve tribes,
twelve commanders of Christ's
flock.
Each tribe,
entwined in its leader's pride,
clung to his shadow
for profit, not for truth.

They became the vizier's thralls—
his words their creed,
his manner their law.

Each one,
had he been told to die,

would have given his life
without a moment's pause.

The Gospel Rewritten

So the vizier,
weaver of confusion,
wrote twelve scrolls—
each a different lie.

Not one path,
but twelve twisting ways.
One scroll preached hunger and
ascetic fire
as the gate of repentance.

Another denied it all—
"Only giving will save you," it said.

A third called both hunger and
charity
a hidden shirk—
a veil between the lover and the
Beloved.

"Only trust and surrender,"
it taught,
"are true."

A fourth warned:
"Trust alone is false.
You must serve."

A Labyrinth of Contradictions

One scroll said:
"Laws are not to be lived,
but to show you your helplessness,
and reveal His power."

Another declared:
"To see your weakness
is ungrateful.
Look instead at your strength—
for it comes from Him."

Another said:
"Leave both views behind.
Everything seen
is but an idol."

The Light and the Veil

One said:
"Keep your sight—
it is your candle
on the path to union."

Another said:
"Blow it out.
Only then
will you see unnumbered visions."

To put out self
was to set the soul ablaze—
and find Layla
waiting

as your Majnun.

Sweetness and Shadows

One scroll spoke:
"What He gave you,
He made sweet.
Accept it.
Do not hurl yourself into sorrow."

Another whispered:
"Abandon the self.
To follow your nature
is to feed the beast."

So Many Roads

Each tribe now
with a road of ease,
a sweetness of belief.
But if ease was the proof of the path,
then fire-worshippers and deniers
would have found the Friend.

Only the food of spirit
makes the heart truly alive.
The taste of the body
soon turns to ash,
its harvest
regret.

The Mask of Ease

What feels easy
may end in bitterness.
Learn to read
the seed and the fruit—
the sweetness in the end
reveals the truth of the beginning.

Who Will Guide You?

Seek a teacher.
You cannot see
the end from where you stand.

If foresight were common,
religions would not splinter.

Yet some scrolls said:
"You are your own master.
Why follow another?
Go your own way."

One or Many?

Some scrolls claimed:
"All this is one.
To see two
is blindness."

Others insisted:
"How can hundreds be one?
This is madness."

Each book clashed with the next—
sugar beside poison.
Until you go beyond

sugar and poison,
you will never smell
the scent of unity.

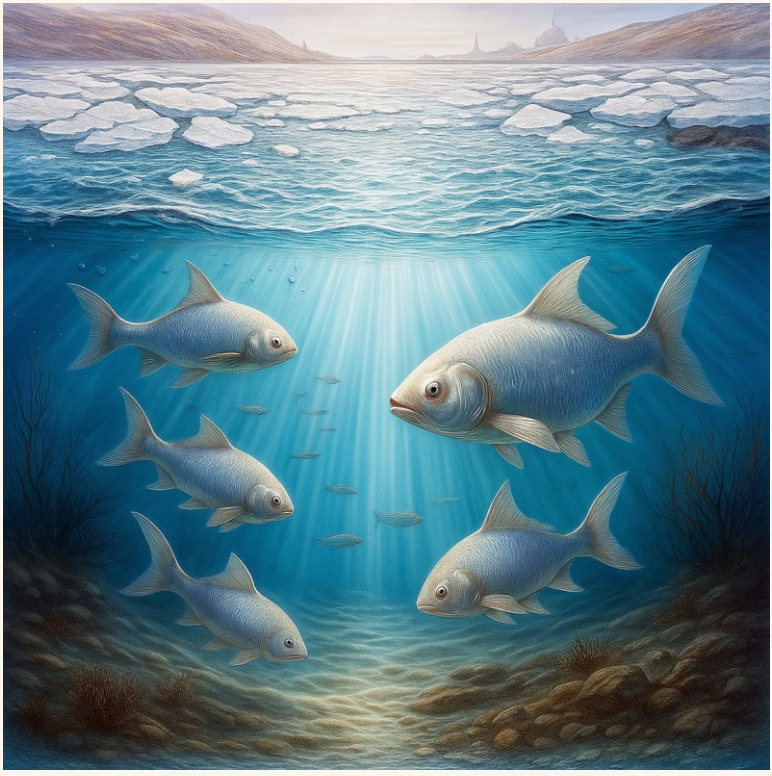
And so he wrote
twelve gospels of falsehood—
a scattered choir,
out of tune
with the song of Jesus.

Light Beyond Colour and Form

(Verses 500–548)

Summary

This passage offers a radiant meditation on unity, Divine grace, and the limits of human perception. Rumi draws upon the symbol of Jesus' singular "hue"—not in physical colour, but in spiritual oneness. To be dyed in Jesus' colour is to be washed free of duality, to become as simple as light. This is not a lifeless uniformity, but a living clarity, like the water where fish thrive and where multiplicity dissolves into unity.



Rumi then turns to images of the created world—oceans, rain, sun, soil—to show how Divine Bounty permeates everything, even inanimate matter. Soil becomes trustworthy because it reflects God's fidelity. The metaphor extends: God's wisdom transforms not only clay into life, but stone into gems and ears

into eyes. Everything lives through His touch, even as His wrath can blind the wise who rely only on intellect.

The section culminates in a profound Sufi truth: even praising God is a kind of subtle sin, because it implies separation—that we exist as praisers, when in reality, all being belongs to Him. Rumi invites us into a mystical erasure of self, a melting into the Sun of Divine Presence. Only by becoming "not-being" can we fully receive the Light.

This is not mere poetry; it is an invitation to lose our multiplicity, our imagined separateness, and to dissolve like snow in sunlight, or a song returning to silence.

Poem Verses

The Unity of Jesus' Hue

He had never tasted
the pure hue of Jesus—
never been steeped
in the dye of His silence.

From that vat of spirit,
even a hundred-colored cloak
is made one—
as light is one,
beyond all shade and seam.

Not the weary dullness
of gray-hearted men,
but like fish
at home in water—
where color dies into clarity.

Yes, the land holds
a thousand shades,
but fish
cannot bear
the arid breath of dust.

The Ocean of Adoration

But who is fish?
Who is sea?
What simile could ever
reach the Majestic King?

Before that Sea
of Bounty and Light,
myriad oceans
and their swimming stars
bow in prostration.

So many rains
of generosity have fallen
that even the sea
scattered pearls
from its depths.

So many suns
of mercy have shone,
the clouds themselves
learned to give
without asking.

The Soil's Trust

The sun of Wisdom
struck earth and clay,
and soil learned
to cradle seeds
with quiet trust.

It returns in kind
what you sow,
never cheating—
mirroring the One
whose Justice
shines even
on dirt.

Until the Spring of God
arrives with its sign,
the soil keeps its secrets,
hidden in silence.

And He,
who gave even soil
this honesty and knowing—
His Grace breathes life
into stone,
and His Wrath
blinds even
the learned.

Mystical Alchemy

Who can bear
the ferment of His fire?
Whom shall I speak to?
No ear remains.

Wherever there was
a listening ear,
He made it see.
Wherever there was stone,
He turned it to jasper.

He is the true alchemist—
what is alchemy
beside Him?

He is the giver
of real miracles—
what is magic
next to this?

The Sin of Being

Even praise

is a veiled complaint—
for praise implies I exist.
And my existence—
a kind of sin
in His Presence.

The only right posture
is not-being—
a blindness,
a mourning blue
frozen in this icy world.

Had it not been blind,
it would have burned—
consumed
in the fire of the Sun.

Had it not been
blue from mourning,
this world of ours
would have melted
like snow.

Longing for the Hidden Guide

(Verses 549–610)

Summary

In this deeply layered mystical tale, Rumi presents the vizier—outwardly a deceiver, yet inwardly a symbol of Divine withdrawal—as a guide who retreats into seclusion, leaving his disciples aching with longing. Their spiritual hunger grows unbearable; they plead, cry, and beseech him to return, likening themselves to children, fish out of water, instruments played only by his touch.

The vizier, however, counsels them instead to abandon external attachments—to wean themselves from milk, words, and sense-perceptions. Only through silence, annihilation, and surrender can the soul hear the true divine call: Return to thy Lord (Qur'an 89:28).

Their protest is not rebellion but yearning. They recognize their voices, their love, even their grief as coming not from themselves but from him—he is the source, they the echo. The imagery is rich with Sufi metaphysics: the veil between body and spirit, the fire of divine love, the non-existence of the lover apart from the Beloved.

Ultimately, the poem reveals a subtle paradox: the vizier's absence creates presence. His seclusion stirs the heart to awaken, his silence opens the ears of the soul. The true guide leads by withdrawing, making space for the seeker to be transformed by longing. Like fish out of water, we thrash in the absence until we remember the Ocean from which we came.

Poem Verses

The Disappearance

The vizier devised another
scheme—
this time, he turned inward,
forsaking sermons,
embracing solitude.

For forty days, maybe more,
he vanished, unseen—
igniting in his followers
a yearning that burned.

Deprived of his presence,
they wept in longing,
starved for the nearness
of his soul's fragrance.

"Without you," they cried,
"we are blind in the dark—
lost children
with no guiding nurse.

Come back to us,
by the grace of God,
and spread again
the shade of your mercy."

He answered softly,
"My soul is near—
but the command has not come.
I must remain hidden."

The Pleading Hearts

Disciples and nobles came,
hearts heavy,
voices trembling:
"How can you leave us,
abandoned like orphans—
bereft of your words,
your light,

your touch?"

"You pretend all is well,"
they said,
"while we, undone,
breathe sighs of fire
through chests of ash."

"We were raised on
your milk of wisdom.
Don't let us wither now,
parched and unsuckled.
What heart would abandon
those who love it?"

"We are fish
flung on dry land—
just lift the dam,
let the stream return."

The Vizier's Counsel

He said:
"Why chase words,
mere wind on the tongue?

Plug the ears of your senses,
unbind the veils from your eyes.

The outer ear deafens
the inward one—
until that noise is stilled,
the soul hears nothing.

Let your mind dissolve,
your senses drop away.
Only then can you hear
the call: Return."

"So long as you cling
to wakeful chatter,
you'll never scent
the conversation of sleep.

Our words,
our actions—
just surface steps.
The real journey
happens in the unseen."

"The body, born of dust,
sees only deserts,
but the Jesus of the spirit—
he walks upon the sea.
You've wandered land
your whole life,
but where will you taste
the Water of Life?"

Land and Sea

"Your thoughts—
dry waves on dry land.
But the waves of Spirit
are intoxication,
annihilation,

and divine loss.

You are drunk
on the wrong wine—
you see nothing
of the cup I offer."

"Enough of words.
For a while,
practice silence."

The Murmuring Return

But still,
they gathered again—
pleading.

"Don't speak to us
in riddles and rebukes.

Burden each soul
according to its strength.
Milk for babes,
bread for those with teeth."

"An unfledged bird
cannot fly,
but once its wings grow,
it lifts without coaxing."

"Your speech
makes devils silent.
Your words—
a flood in our desert."

"With you,
even this earth
outshines the heavens.
Without you,
even heaven
feels dim."

Heaven and Heart

"Yes, the heavens
have the form of majesty,
but the essence of glory
belongs to spirit alone.

Bodies wear the shape—
but the light
belongs to souls."

The Vizier's Final Refusal

He replied:
"Stop arguing.
Let my words
reach your hearts.

If you trust me,
why doubt
when I say
light is dark
or dark is light?

If I carry the truth,

why harass me still?

I will not leave this cave.
My soul is busy—
inwardly."

Their Response—Voices of Unity

"We do not doubt you,"
they cried.
"We speak not as strangers.

Tears run from our eyes,
sighs rise from our souls.
A child doesn't fight its nurse—
it only cries,
not knowing why."

"We are your harp—
you pluck the string.
It is your own song
you hear in us."

"We are your reed,
you are the breath.
We are mountains,
you are the echo."

"We are chess pieces—
it is you who moves us,
toward loss or victory."

Being and Non-Being

"Who are we,
O soul of our souls,
to exist apart from you?

We are shadows—
you, the sun.

We are the banner—
you, the wind that makes us dance.
The wind is unseen,
but we move only by it."

"Our being
is from your gift.
Our nothingness
fell in love
with your being."

"Do not take
your sweetness away.

If you do,
who could ask why?
How can a painted form
argue with the artist?"

The Silent Origin

"Even when we were not,
you heard the unspoken prayer
of our nothingness—
and called us into being."

The Hidden Hand Behind All Things

(Verses 611–642)

Summary

In this passage, Rumi tenderly guides us into the mystery of divine omnipotence and human will. He uses the metaphor of an image—lifeless until the painter's hand moves it—to reveal that our actions, too, are shaped by the unseen Artist. We are as cloth before the needle, incapable of choosing the pattern embroidered upon us. Yet, this is not to strip us of responsibility; instead, it awakens awe before God's majesty (jabbārī) and calls us to humility.

Through verses that quote the Qur'an and evoke Sufi metaphysics, Rumi insists this is not about fatalism (jabr), but about understanding our place before the One who truly acts. Illness becomes a mirror, awakening the heart to

conscience and remorse. In our moments of pain, we glimpse our truest self—weak, but yearning.

He addresses the hypocrisy of claiming we are "compelled" only when we face failure, while proudly asserting agency in moments of pleasure. The prophets viewed the world's trials as inevitable, yet they embraced the afterlife with a profound sense of choice and longing. The spiritually blind reverse this—clinging to the world while denying the hereafter.

At its heart, this poem invites us to awaken. To see Divine Power not as a force to resist, but a Love that both humbles and lifts us, if we are willing to let go and be remade.

Poem Verses

The Picture Cannot Paint Itself

Before the painter lifts his brush,
the image is helpless—
like a child curled in the dark of the womb.

Before the Almighty,
every soul in His court
is as still as cloth
before the embroiderer's needle.

He draws the Devil's shape,
then Adam's.
He paints joy,
then sorrow—
each stroke,
a mystery beyond our reach.

We cannot lift a hand in protest,
nor speak a word
to claim harm or favor.

God's Power, Not Our Own

The Qur'an whispers:
"You did not throw
when you threw."
That arrow—
if it leaves our hands—
was not ours to launch.

We are the bow.
He is the Archer.

This is not coercion—
it is divine sovereignty.
His Might humbles us,

if we are wise.

Humility shows we are bound.
But guilt—
guilt proves
we also choose.

Without choice,
why would shame rise up?
Why would we tremble
in sorrow, confusion, and regret?

A Mirror in Illness

Why do teachers scold students?
Why does the mind turn away
from what it once planned?

If you say God's compulsion
is veiled—
like the moon hidden in cloud—
listen well,
there is a reply
that might soften your doubt
and draw your heart
toward the path of faith.

Illness awakens the soul.
When sickness visits,
the conscience stirs.

You cry out,
"Forgive me, Lord—
I see my wrongs!"

You vow to return.
You promise obedience.
Pain gives birth
to a new resolve.

So know this,
O seeker of truth:
pain carries a scent
from the gardens of wakefulness.

The more awake a soul,
the more it suffers.
The more it sees,
the paler it becomes.

The Test of True Helplessness

If you claim
to feel His compulsion,
where is your humility?
Where is the weight of awe
at His almightiness?

Can one chained in prison
sing and dance
like the free?

If you truly feel bound,
why do you act
as a tyrant
toward the weak?

Is that the behavior
of the powerless?

If you don't feel His grip,
don't claim you are compelled.
If you do feel it,
where is the trembling?

Selective Submission

You feel power
when desire moves you.
But when you lack will,
you blame God:
"This is from Him."

The prophets—
they saw this world's works
as fated.
But the fools—
they claim only the next world
is beyond their choice.

The prophets,
drawn to the heights of 'Illiyyīn,
choose their path to God.

The heedless—
kin to the depths of Sijjīn—
cling to this world,
calling it freedom.

Each bird flies
to its own kind.
The spirit leads,
the body follows.

This teaching has no end,
but for now, we must return
to bring the story to its close.

A Whisper Behind the Veil

(Verses 643–667)

Summary

In this mystical parable, a vizier—servant of the spiritual realm—prepares for his final departure from the world. Following the command of Jesus, he embraces solitude, renouncing even the illusion of selfhood. His farewell is not a death of despair, but a joyful return to the celestial realm—"beside Jesus at the top of the Fourth Heaven"—where the soul escapes the fire of worldly suffering.

Before his withdrawal, he appointed each of the amírs (nobles) as his successor, whispering to each that they alone are chosen, each receiving a contradictory scroll. Here, Rumi unfolds the paradox of spiritual succession: the Divine cannot be bound to a single form, rule, or leader. Just as letters differ in shape and direction, so too do the forms of truth revealed to each soul.

Finally, the vizier performs the ultimate renunciation, slaying his ego and disappearing from existence. His death, far from being sorrowful, becomes a scene of sacred awakening. Thousands come to his grave, overwhelmed with grief, not only for his loss but perhaps for their distance from the path he quietly walked. Rumi hints here at fanā'—the annihilation of self in God—as a radiant mystery, celebrated even in the stillness of the tomb.

This is not the end of a man—it is the veil lifting from the soul.

Poem Verses

The Veil of Departure

From the silence behind the wall,
the vizier cried out—
"My beloved disciples, listen well:
Jesus has given me a message,
and I must obey.

He whispered,
'Turn your face away from the
world.
Be alone.
Withdraw,
even from yourself.'

So now,
no more words.
No more counsel.
I leave behind the world of voices."

He paused,
as though saying farewell not just
to them—
but to breath itself.

"I am already gone.
My soul has climbed
to the Fourth Heaven,
carrying all I held dear,
so I won't be burned
beneath the fire-wheel of this
world.

I am gone,
to sit beside Jesus,
above the blaze,
beyond the turning spheres."

Secret Successors

Then one by one,
he called the nobles—
each amír summoned in quiet.

To each he said,
"In the way of the Messiah,
you are God's viceroy.
All others are your helpers.
Jesus himself has set them
beneath your care.

If one among them rebels,
seize him.
Strike him down,
or chain him—
but speak of none of this
until I have vanished from the
world.

Until my death,
keep this trust sealed.
Wait in silence."

To each he gave a scroll—
each one whispered
a different truth.

They did not match.
Each was its own path.
Each scroll contradicted the next—
like letters spun backward
from yā to alif.

The Death That Is Freedom

After forty days,
behind his closed door,
he slipped free—
killed his own self
and was gone.

When the people learned of it,
they gathered as if it were the Day
of Judgment.
An ocean of sorrow rose around
his grave—
Arab, Turk, Greek, and Kurd,
tearing their hair,
rending their clothes.

They lifted the dust of his tomb
onto their heads,
as if grief could heal them.
For a month,
they wept rivers of blood
from their eyes.

A Lamp in the Absence of the Sun

(Verses 668–693)

Summary

In this passage, the people mourn the loss of a spiritual guide—likely a vizier or saintly figure—and ask the remaining leaders who among them will take his place. Rumi uses this occasion to explore the role of spiritual vicars or successors (khalīfa)—those who, though not God Himself, carry His light and serve as reminders of Divine Presence just as rosewater carries the memory of the rose, so prophets and saints carry the essence of the Beloved.

Rumi then shifts from the outer question to a metaphysical insight: the seeming "twoness" between the vicar and the Divine is a mistake born of attachment to form. Those who are veiled by form see division; those who have transcended form perceive unity. Through images of lamps merging in light, fruit

blending in essence, and the breaking of rigid form through suffering, Rumi guides us toward the Sufi realization of tawḥīd—the indivisible Oneness of all being in God.

The final lines offer a gentle caution: these truths are not for the faint of heart or the literal-minded. The sword of Reality cuts deep. Thus, Rumi chooses at times to speak in riddles or silence, out of mercy for those not yet ready to bear the full brilliance of the sun.

This passage is an invitation to trust the light beyond the form, and to let sorrow be the fire that burns away the illusion of separation.

Poem Verses

When the Sun is Gone

The people cried,
"O noble ones—tell us now:
Which of the chiefs shall stand in
his place?
Whose hand shall we kiss?
To whom shall we give
the loyalty once offered
to that trusted guide?"

The sorrow has burned us—
the Sun has set,
and our hearts are branded
by its going.

Shall we not light a lamp
when the sun is hidden?
Shall we not keep a token
when the Beloved
has vanished from sight?

If the rose is gone,
and the garden laid waste,
let us at least draw its scent
from rosewater.

God cannot be seen,
so the prophets—
peace upon them—
are His mirrors,
His vicars upon the earth.

But no!
Even this is a veil—
to call them two,
the Vicar

and the One he represents.

To the eye that sees forms,
they appear as separate.
But to the eye that sees
through Spirit,
they are
One.

Light Within Light

When you look at the shape,
you see twoness—
but look at the light
that shines from the eye.
That light has no borders,
no names.

If ten lamps burn
in one place,
each has its form—
its glass, its wick.
But the light...

Who can separate
which ray belongs to which flame?

If you crush a hundred apples,
a hundred quinces,
what remains
is not many,
but one.

In the world of Spirit,
there is no number.
No partition.
No counting.

Sweet is the Oneness
of the Friend
with His friends.

Cling to that footfall
of spirit.
Break the tyranny
of form—
make it thin
through suffering.

Beneath it,
you'll find
Unity—
a hidden treasure.

And if you don't,
His grace
will do the work.
Oh heart,
you are already His servant.

The Treasure of Unity

He reveals Himself
to hearts
and mends the dervish's
tattered cloak.

Once,
we were one essence—
simple and whole.
No heads,
no feet—
just Light,
pure and knotted not,
like flowing water.

Then that radiant Sun
took on form—
and cast
a thousand shadows
on the battlements of Time.

Tear down those battlements
with the catapult
of your love,
and let every wall of separation
fall.

A Gentle Warning

I could explain this
more fiercely,
more fully—
but I fear
a delicate heart
may stumble.

These truths are sharp—
like blades of steel.
If you don't carry
the shield
of understanding,
turn back.

This sword is not ashamed
to cut.

So I hide it in silence,
lest someone misread
its meaning
and walk away
wounded.

The True Blade of the Heart

(Verses 694–726)

Summary

In this passage, Rumi tells of a time after a great spiritual leader's death, when noble followers seek a successor. Two contenders arise, each presenting a scroll to validate their claim as vicar. But soon, ambition erupts into bloodshed, revealing the cost of ego masked in righteousness. Rumi mourns the mounds of bodies yet reveals a deeper truth: those who held true spirit within, like pomegranates full of sweet juice, are purified in death and lifted beyond.

Through this parable, he warns against empty form—like wooden swords or hollow laughter—and urges seekers to discern truth beneath appearances. Real worth is hidden within; the saints carry the sword of Reality, and their company

transforms even stone to jewel. True seekers must follow not the body, but the heart's pull toward light and divine companionship.

The parable serves as a timeless warning against false authority and the critical need to distinguish essence from empty form. The poem concludes with a loving call to action: seek out the true "friends of God," for they carry the sword of Reality. In their company, Rumi promises that we can feed our hearts, turn stone into a jewel, and walk surely toward the light.

Poem Verses

The Loyal Seekers Rise

After their guide passed into the unseen,
the righteous ones rose,
their hearts still burning,
calling for another to lead them.

One noble stepped forward,
claiming the mantle,
unrolling a scroll in his hand—
"I am his vicar,
I carry the authority of Jesus."

But then—
another appeared, fierce and hidden,
and he too raised a scroll,
declaring the same.

Soon, a sectarian fury seized them all,
and every claimant unsheathed a sword,
each with a scroll as proof.
Like maddened elephants,
they clashed—
steel and parchment
against blood and bone.

The Seeds of Division

From those first seeds of discord,
hundreds of thousands of
Christians were slain;
a terrible harvest rose:
heads in heaps,
blood like rivers,
dust like mountains.
But within the broken shells of men—
those with the kernel of spirit
shone bright after death.
Their martyrdom was not an end

but a release,
like splitting open apples and
pomegranates:
the sweet poured forth as nectar,
the rotten exposed as hollow.

What is death,
but a breaking of the shell,
revealing what was hidden?

Choose Substance Over Shell

So go—
seek the core, not the skin,
for reality is the wing
on the body of form.

A body without spirit
is like a wooden sword—
only fit to burn.
In battle,
don't wield a toy.
First,
test the blade.

If it is true—
strong as iron—
march on with joy.
If it is wood,
put it down,
and search for what is real.

The Light of the Saints

That true sword—
the blade of the real—
lies with the saints.
To sit with them
is to touch the Elixir.

The wise have always said it:
the saint is a mercy,
a gift to the world.

If you buy a pomegranate,
choose the one that laughs—
its cracked smile reveals its jewels.

Blessed is its laughter,
for it shows its heart,
like a pearl within the soul's casket.

Heart-Knowing and Transformation

Do not be fooled
by the false laugh of the anemone,
whose red lips
hide a blackened core.

But the smiling pomegranate
makes the whole garden bloom.
To walk with the friends of God
is to become one of them.

Even if you were stone,

their love would turn you
into a gem.

Plant their love
in your soul.
Give your heart
only to those
whose hearts are light.

Don't wander toward despair—
there are always stars.
Don't walk into shadows—
the sun still shines.

Follow the Pull of Spirit

The heart pulls you
toward the people of the heart.
The body drags you
into the prison
of clay and water.

So feed your heart
from hearts like yours.
Find one who walks ahead—
and follow him
toward the Real.

The Blessing Hidden in His Name

(Verses 727–739)

Summary

This passage recounts the discovery of Christian communities that found the name of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)—Mustafa, also known as Ahmad—written in their sacred scripture, the Gospel. Those among them who recognized his noble character and honoured his name with love and reverence were spiritually protected, even in times of persecution. They took shelter in the barakah (blessing) of his name, and their generations prospered.

Others, misled by a scheming vizier and poisoned by arrogance, rejected his name. In doing so, they lost both spiritual clarity and communal harmony. Their disdain led to a slow decline, both in their faith and their unity.

The poem reflects a deep Sufi insight: the sacred name of the Prophet (PBUH) carries immense spiritual power. Even those who do not yet know the fullness of his message may receive Divine grace simply by holding his name in their hearts. The poem suggests that if just the name can offer such protection, the essence of the Prophet (PBUH)—his light, mercy, and nearness to God—must be unimaginably vast.

The reference to "the Name as a fortress" echoes Qur'anic themes, where God's names serve as refuges, and the Prophet (PBUH) is seen as the manifestation of Divine Mercy. The passage invites us not just to admire the Prophet (PBUH) outwardly, but to seek the inward light that his name carries—a light that illuminates and safeguards the soul.

Poem Verses

A Hidden Name in a Sacred Book

The name of Mustafá—
the Chosen One, the ocean of
purity—
was written
in the pages of the Gospel.

His noble traits were recorded
there:
his fasting,
his battles,
his way of breaking bread—
all lovingly preserved.

There were Christians,
sincere in their hearts,
who, when they read
his radiant name and story,
bent low in reverence,
and pressed their lips
to that holy Name,
drawn by the scent of Divine
reward.

The Shelter of the Name

Through the storms of tyranny,
they walked untouched—
protected from the vizier's wrath,
free from fear.

They sought refuge
in the shelter of Ahmad's name,
and through his light
their children multiplied,
flourished like stars

in a blessed sky.

But others,
who scorned that name,
grew smaller
in soul and in fortune.

Falling into Discord

Their hearts hardened,
their faith crumbled,
their law became corrupted
by scrolls written in error
and darkened by deceit.

A vizier,
a master of manipulation,
spread discord among them,
and they became fragmented,
divided by his whisperings.

The Power of a Name

Even his name,
Ahmad,
was a fortress—
a light stronger than any sword.

If just the name
offered this much refuge,
imagine the beauty,
the radiance,
the mercy
of the One
behind the name.

The Fire That Spoke of Self

(Verses 740–782)

Summary

This passage unfolds a layered parable of spiritual lineage, destiny, and the metaphysics of affinity. A tyrant, echoing a past persecutor of Christ's followers, embodies the cyclical nature of evil passed through generations. Rumi then shifts into a contemplative reflection on spiritual heredity—not of blood, but of inner light and elemental essence. Just as veins carry either sweet or bitter water, souls inherit inclinations toward God or away from Him.

The poem explores how souls resonate with celestial influences, whether from the well-known planets or the luminous, divine stars beyond human reckoning. These higher stars, untouched by fire or fate, radiate God's unbroken light. Those connected to them are not ruled by impulse, but by divine

command; their light is steady, like the saints whose anger is pure and not tainted by ego.

The soul's true colour—its spiritual state—is not seen in outward form, like the ox, but inwardly, through purity or corruption. God's light, scattered like a hidden blessing, is only gathered by those who open their hearts. Rumi emphasizes that everything returns to its origin: souls born of the sea of divine love will return to it, like rivers finding their home.

The poem reminds us that a person's true colour is not found on the outside, but is hidden deep within, drawn either from a vat of purity or the dark waters of sin. God scatters His light upon all souls, but only the loving heart knows how to gather it. This is the great journey Rumi illuminates for us: everything in existence is returning to its source, just as a river rushes to the sea, and a soul, moved by love, rises to meet the Divine.

Poem Verses

Whispers of an Ancient Fire

Another king rose—
of the same shadowed blood
that once cast ruin on the lovers of Jesus.

And for the heart of this tale,
the Qur'an speaks of it—
in the chapter that swears an oath
by a star-filled sky.

He followed
the cursed path of his forefather,
and so the curse followed him,
hour by hour.

The righteous had passed on,
but their footsteps remained—
a quiet legacy.

From the wicked, only injustice
stayed behind,
a lingering stench of rage and ruin.

Bloodlines of Water and Fire

Each generation turns
to its own kind,
as seeds look skyward from the same soil.

Sweet water, bitter water—

they stream vein by vein
through every creature's form,
until the final trumpet sounds.

The pure inherit the sweet stream.
What stream?
The Book—entrusted
to the chosen ones of God.

If you listen with a seeking heart,
you'll hear their prayers
as rays from the light of prophecy.
And those rays—
they circle, always drawn
to their source.

The Dance of Light and Affinity

A gleam of sunlight
spins around the walls of the
house—
it moves,
because the sun is moving
through the signs of the sky.

So too,
a soul leans toward the star
it was born beneath.

If Venus rose over your birth,
your whole being leans toward joy.
If Mars—
then battle stirs your blood.

But beyond these seven planets,
there are stars
with no flame,
no wrath,
no discord.

Stars that shine
in the unbroken light of God—
neither near, nor far
from one another.

When one's destiny
flows from those hidden stars,
his soul is a fire
that burns away disbelief,
not out of hate,
but with divine purpose.

Not like the anger of Mars—
restless, fierce,
now ruling,
now ruled.

No—
this is the light of the saints.
Held secure
between God's two radiant fingers,
it cannot fade.

The Scales of Fortune and Light

God scattered this light

over all souls.

Only the fortunate
held out their skirts
to gather it.

And those who did—
they turned their faces
from everything
but Him.

Those without love's garment
were left behind,
bare,
in the shadow.

Every single form
leans toward its source—
the many to the One.
Nightingales
lose themselves
in the rose.

The ox shows its color
on the outside,
but the human—
his true hue is hidden within.

The colors of the good
come from the vat of purity.
The wicked draw
from black water,
tainted by sin.

God's baptism
is that subtle color.
His curse—
a stench on the soul.

What comes from the sea,
returns to the sea.
Just so—
torrents rush down
from the mountain,
and the soul,
moved by love,
rises from this body
and returns.

The Fire Became a Garden

(Verses 783–811)

Summary

In this luminous parable, a tyrant seeks to force a mother into idol-worship by casting her child into a fire. Her faith falters—until, miraculously, the child speaks from within the flames, calling her not to fear but to enter. He declares the fire to be no fire at all, but a hidden mercy from God—a vision of the unseen world where divine joy has clothed itself in the illusion of flame.

Through the child's voice, Rumi evokes the story of Abraham, whose fire became cool by God's command, and he extends it to a deeper mystical vision: that what we call "life" is a narrow womb, and true birth begins when we surrender into the fire of God's love. Here, in this mystical flame, every atom breathes with the spirit of Jesus, and illusion falls away.

The child urges his mother—and all—into this divine fire, which has become a feast, a spring, a field of light. Drawn by love for the Divine Friend, people leap into the flames with no hesitation. Their faith transforms their fear into longing, their bodies into spirit. Even the soldiers cannot stop them. And the tyrant, who sought to shame them, is instead undone by his cruelty.

This tale reveals key Sufi teachings: the annihilation (fanā') of the self, the illusion of worldly life, the burning away of ego in Divine Love, and the mystery of death as a hidden doorway to eternal life. The fire, a Qur'anic and Sufi symbol of trial, becomes here a symbol of awakening—a place where moths find not death, but reunion.

Poem Verses

A Mother's Trial

The tyrant flung a mother's child
into a blazing fire—
and fear crushed her soul.
She stepped back,
ready to kneel before the idol,
her heart broken from faith.

The Child Speaks from the Flames

But then,
a voice rose from the flames.

I am not dead,
O mother, come!
I am alive in joy—
though your eyes see only fire,
this fire is a veil,
a trick of the eye.

It is not wrath,
but God's mercy wearing a mask,
shining out from the Unseen.

Hidden Mercy, Unseen Joy

Come, mother, see God's signs.
Come, and taste what the chosen taste.
Step into this fire
and witness the mystery
of water disguised as flame—
and leave behind
a world that is truly fire,
though it looks like water.

Come, and remember Abraham—
how the fire turned to a garden,
how cypress and jasmine

welcomed him within.

From Womb to World to Light

I feared being born,
feared falling from your womb
into this world—
but once I was born,
I was freed
into fresh air,
into beauty and breath.

Now,
this world feels like that narrow
womb.
For here, in the fire,
I have found
a vast and gentle world—
each atom
filled with the breath of Jesus.

The Veil of Illusion

Here is a world
that seems invisible,
yet truly exists—
while that world of form,
though it seems real,
is fading.

Come in, mother,
for the sake of all you are to me.
See how this fire
does not burn.
Joy is here.
Do not let it pass you by.

The Banquet in the Fire

You've seen the power of the
tyrant—
now see the power of God's grace.
I call you from compassion,
not for myself,
for I am utterly lost
in the ecstasy of this fire.

Come in—
and call the others.
The King has laid
a banquet here,
within the flames.

O believers,
come, all of you—
for everything but this sweetness
is torment.

Come,
like moths,
to the light
that carries a hundred springs.

Hearts Leap Toward the Beloved

This the child cried,
from the heart of the fire,
as the people listened,

their spirits trembling.

And then—
man and woman alike,
one after another,
they leapt
into the fire.

No one forced them,
no one led them—
only the pull
of the Friend,
from whom all sweetness flows.

The Tyrant's Defeat

The crowd rushed forward,
while soldiers tried to hold them
back:
"Don't go in!"

But the tyrant,
the Jew who had done this,
turned pale.
Ashamed.
Heart-sick.

For faith grew fierce
like fire,
and the people let their bodies
die—
to live in God.

Thanks be to God!
The Devil's plan became his snare.
Thanks be to God!
His shame
returned to him tenfold.

He who tried
to stain the faces of the faithful
saw only his own
darkened.

He who tore
the honor of the seekers
had his own cloak
ripped away—
while they emerged untouched.

The Mouth That Mocked the Beloved

(Verses 812–822)

Summary

In this brief parable, a man mocks the name of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), only to find his mouth physically contorted by his scorn. Stricken with guilt, he returns in repentance, recognizing that his mockery was truly self-inflicted harm. Through this, Rumi reveals a deeper truth: God sometimes exposes our hidden faults by turning us against His beloveds, while His mercy hides our flaws by keeping us silent, even about those who may be blameworthy.

The poem then shifts into a mystical meditation on Divine mercy. True blessing lies in the heart drawn to sorrow for God, in tears shed for the Beloved. Just as water brings life to barren soil, tears summon the rain of mercy. Rumi invites us to weep, not from despair, but from the longing that opens the gates of

love. He reminds us that all pain, when surrendered to the Divine, becomes a path to joy, and that those who live with compassion will find compassion waiting for them.

This story teaches not only the power of prophetic dignity and the danger of derision, but also the spiritual law of reciprocity: we receive what we give. And always, beneath the outer tale, the deeper invitation—to let longing carve the soul into a vessel fit for grace.

Poem Verses

A Warning Veiled in Mercy

He twisted his lips
mocking the name
of the Beloved—
Ahmad,
peace upon him always.

But that crookedness
clung to his mouth,
refusing to release him.

Ashamed, he returned—
"O Prophet," he wept,
"O ocean of hidden gifts,
Forgive my foolish pride."

"I mocked you,
but see—
I was only mocking myself."

The Veil of Delusion

When God
wishes to unveil a soul—
to lay it bare—
He lets the heart
grow hostile
to saints.

But when He chooses
to protect someone,
He seals their lips
even against the blameworthy.

When the Divine
wills mercy,
He draws the soul
toward humble grief.

Blessed are the eyes
that weep for Him,

Blessed the hearts
burned in His fire.

Tears end in laughter.
He who sees the end
is already among
the blessed.

Where Mercy Flows

Where water flows,
greenery follows.
Where tears fall,
Divine mercy
descends.

Be like the water-wheel—
turning, weeping—
so that the garden
of your soul
may bloom again.

If you long for tears,
show kindness
to one who weeps.
If you seek mercy,
offer mercy
to the weak.

The Fire Spoke of God

(Verses 823–878)

Summary

This passage begins with a confrontation between a Jewish king and a mysterious fire that miraculously refuses to burn its victims. The king questions the fire, bewildered by its mercy. But the fire speaks, revealing it is unchanged, still fire, still fierce, but now held in check by the will of God.

Rumi, through the fire's voice, teaches us that natural forces are not autonomous; they are servants of the Divine. Whether fire burns or becomes cool, whether wind destroys or protects, it is all by God's command. Every element—fire, wind, water, earth—comes alive in His presence and obeys His decree.

The poem then journeys through sacred history, drawing from the Qur'an: Abraham is safe in the fire, the sea saves Moses, the earth swallows Qārūn, and the clay bird is brought to life by Jesus. Each image is a mirror, showing how matter becomes spirit when touched by Divine will.

Finally, Rumi reminds us that the path to truth requires seeing beyond outer causes to the spiritual roots behind them. For the mystic, pain becomes joy, death becomes a breeze, and even the elements dance in obedience to God.

This is a lesson in tawḥīd—the oneness of all being under God's command. The fire burns, or it blesses. The choice is not its own. Like the reed that sings only what is breathed into it, all things are instruments in the hand of the Beloved.

Poem Verses

A Circle of Flame

The king turned toward the fire,
and said,
"O fierce one, devourer of worlds,
Why have you grown so still?
Where is your wild nature, your
hunger for flesh?
Why are you silent,
when you never knew patience
before?

You burned even those who
worshipped you—
what holds you back now
from one who never bowed to your
flame?
Has some spell dimmed your
power?
Has your fire been charmed by our
fortune?
Or is it magic, an illusion,
that this towering blaze
does not consume?"

The Fire Replies

"I am still the fire," it answered.
"Step into me—feel my heat.
I have not changed.
My element is pure.
I burn by the command of God.
I am His sword.
I cut only by His leave.

Just as the Turcoman dogs
guard the tent for honored guests
but leap like lions
at strangers and foes—
I too am loyal.
Would I be less devoted than a dog?
Is God less alive than a nomad king?

If I burn you, it is His will.
If I spare you,
it is He who has cooled my flame."

The Fire Is a Servant

"If the fire scorches you,
it is the Lord of Truth
who placed pain within it.
If it brings you joy,
it is His mercy that warms you.

When pain touches you,
seek forgiveness—
even pain has purpose
when it comes by His decree.

He can turn agony into joy,
captivity into freedom.
Earth, water, air, and flame—
they are lifeless in our hands,
but alive in God's.
They bow to Him,
burning and writhing with longing,
like lovers who cannot rest.

Strike iron to stone—
watch the spark leap out!
It is God's order that gives fire its foot.
But beware,
do not strike the iron of injustice
against the stone of greed—
they birth destruction,
like man and woman
in dark union."

Causes Beyond Causes

"Stone and iron
are only vessels.
Look higher.
Every visible cause
was born from an unseen cause.

Prophets are guided
by a higher thread.
This outer world is a well,
and the causes you see—
only the rope.

The rope moves with the wheel,
but if you cannot see
who turns it,
you have missed the truth.

Do not cling to
the spinning cords of fate.
Or you, too,
will spin like the sky—
empty, dizzy, and lost.

Fire can become air,
air can become fire—
they drink the wine
of God's will.

Open your eyes,
and you will see
both the mercy
and the wrath
flow from Him."

Sacred Boundaries

"Remember the wind
sent to destroy the people of ʿĀd?
It roared through the land,
but when it reached
the circle drawn by Hūd,
it grew quiet—
gentle as a breeze
from the garden of Joseph.

Just as Shaybān the shepherd
drew a line around his sheep
before he left for prayer,
so the wolves of desire
were kept away
by the mark of a friend of God.

For those who know God,
even death
is no more than
a soft wind
carrying a scent
of home.

The fire did not burn Abraham—
how could it harm
one chosen by the Friend?

The pure were untouched
by the fire of lust
that consumed the rest.

The sea, at God's command,
welcomed Moses,
but swallowed Pharaoh.

The earth, too, obeyed—
opening its mouth
to swallow Qārūn
and his hoarded gold.

Clay and water,
when kissed
by the breath of Jesus,
spread wings,
became a bird,

and flew."

Matter as Mirror

"Your glorification of God
rises from clay and water—
a song that becomes
a bird of Paradise
when your heart breathes it with
truth.

Even Mount Sinai,
in the presence of Moses,
began to dance
and became a dervish,
free from all blemish.

If a mountain
can turn into a Sufi,
why not the body
of Moses,
which too was clay?"

Whispers Toward Our Home

(Verses 879–898)

Summary

This luminous section of the Masnavi contemplates the soul's journey upward, like water drawn invisibly by the wind, the breath carries the soul toward its Source. Our sincere words and intentions rise with that breath as offerings to God, and in return, a double mercy descends. Rumi likens this divine exchange to the remembrance of joy: every being seeks the place where it once tasted delight. What is truly ours comes from our origin; what only seems to belong will pass.

The imagery of wind and water mirrors the soul's subtle ascent. Bread and water, once foreign, become part of our being, suggesting that spiritual nourishment, too, may begin as other but become our essence.

The final verses warn against false pleasures—things that appear sweet or promising but lack true kinship with the soul. Just as a bird, a thirsty traveller, or a merchant is deceived by illusion, so too can we be misled by appearances that resemble truth but hold no substance. The poem concludes with a stark caution: falsehood may dazzle, but it ultimately leads to the darkness of loss.

This is a gentle call to discernment, to live in the rhythm of giving and receiving with God, and to remember the pull of our origin—the home our soul never truly forgets.

Poem Verses

The Soul's Gentle Ascent

When water rests,
sealed in a jar,
the wind draws it upward—
not in haste,
but with secret persistence,
carrying it home to the sky.

Just so,
our breath lifts the soul
bit by bit
from this prison of earth—
too slowly to see,
yet surely,
it rises.

Our true words
become fragrance,
ascending—
only God knows where.
They travel with our breath
like offerings,
toward the Eternal.

And then,
a mercy returns,
greater than we gave—
a double grace
flowing back
from the Glorious One.

He teaches us again
to speak what is good,
that we may receive
more of what we've offered.

So rises our voice,
and descends His mercy—
this ceaseless rhythm,
this sacred exchange.

Never let it falter.

The Soul Remembers Its Source

Let us speak in Persian now:
this attraction,
this pull toward the Divine,
comes from the same place
where the sweetness first began.

Every eye
turns toward the place
where once it knew
a taste of joy.

Each part
longs for its whole.
And if it clings to another,
it must resemble the true.

Water and bread—
not of us,
yet they become part of us.
They enter,
and we grow.

Though they appear strange,
they prove themselves kin
by what they become
in us.

And if our joy comes
from what is not truly ours,
then it is only a likeness—
a loan.
And every loan,
in time,
is taken back.

The False Cannot Last

A bird delights in the fowler's
whistle,
until it sees the trap,
and flees.

The thirsty one runs to the mirage,
only to find
no water.

The debtor treasures false gold,
until it's shamed
at the mint.

Beware the glitter that deceives.
Beware the voice of illusion—
lest it cast you,
like Joseph,
into a well.

Tying Your Camel, Then Trusting

(Verses 899–947)

Summary

In this tale, the animals—disturbed by a lion's attacks—approach him with an offer of daily provisions if he agrees to stop hunting them. A spiritual conversation unfolds, turning their pact into a rich metaphor for the balance between Divine trust (tawakkul) and human effort (kasb).

The lion, embodying active will and caution born of betrayal, insists that trust must walk alongside action. The beasts, representing pure surrender, urge him to let go of control and rely entirely on God. This gentle tension mirrors the Sufi dialectic between surrendering to Divine destiny and honouring the path of spiritual endeavour.

Symbolic stories are evoked: Pharaoh's blindness despite his violence, the fall of souls upon striving, and the Divine wisdom behind binding the camel even while trusting its protection to God.

Ultimately, Rumi encourages us to sow with humility and trust. True trust in God is not a form of laziness. It is planting seeds with a heart surrendered to the Giver of growth. Only then does faith bloom into union.

Poem Verses

A Kingdom Disturbed

In a lush valley,
beasts once grazed in peace—
until a lion stalked them,
leaping from shadows,
tearing quiet into fear.

The meadow soured.
Their safety turned bitter.
So they gathered,
a trembling council,
and stood before the lion.

"We'll feed you," they said.
"A portion each day.
Just stay your claws.
Let the grasses remain sweet."

The Lion's Suspicion

"Yes—if I find honesty,"
the lion replied,
"not tricks,
not the poisons
I've tasted before.

Men have burned me—
their lies worse
than the scorpion's sting.
But worst of all," he growled,
"is the beast within—
the nafs,
my own lower self,
cunning, concealed.

Even he—God's Beloved—
warned us:
'The believer is not stung
from the same hole twice.'"

The Beasts Counsel Trust

The beasts, gentle and sincere,
spoke as one:
"O wise lion,
let go of control.

Trust in God—
He is better than your plans.

What can caution do
before His decree?
Struggle
only breeds sorrow.
Surrender—
and the dawn will not strike you
down."

The Lion Holds His Ground

"Yes," said the lion,
"but even trust has a path.
The Prophet taught:
Tie your camel,
then trust in God.

Act.
Move.
Work with what He gave—
for God loves
the one who earns.
Don't let trust
make you careless."

The Beasts Doubt Action

"Work," they said,
"is the trick of the weak.
It hides hunger,
but feeds no soul.

Trust in God—
is there anything dearer?

Flee from the snake,
you'll find a dragon.
Build a trap,
and fall into it.

Look at Pharaoh—
he slaughtered thousands,
yet the one he feared
grew in his own house.

Our sight is flawed.
Let it die
in the vision of God.
His seeing,
our seeing—
what a holy exchange.

Like infants,
before they crawl or run,
we ride
on the shoulders of the Beloved.

When we strive alone,
we fall."

The Lion Speaks of Ladders

"Yes," the lion answered,
"but God placed a ladder—
each step,

a way toward the roof of meaning.

You have feet—
why claim to be lame?
Hands—
why hide your grasp?

The spade in your hand
is no accident.
His signs are plain,
if your heart can see them.

Take the hint.
Live the mystery.
Bear what He gives,
and you'll be lifted.
Obey—
and you'll be received.

Seek—
and union will come.

Freedom is gratitude.
To deny your will
is to deny the Giver."

The Sleep of Fatalism

"Fatalism is sleep
on the open road.

Do not sleep—
not until you reach the gate!

Not unless you lie
beneath the Tree
whose fruit falls
with every breeze.

Sleep otherwise,
and robbers will take all.

You boast of being 'man,'
yet shy away
from His signs—
your mind turned
into a tail."

The Closing Counsel

"This little understanding you
claim—
it won't last.
A mind ungrateful
falls headlong
into the fire.

If you truly trust God,
then sow.
Plant your seeds.
Then rely
on the One who sustains."

Where Trust Begins to Speak

(Verses 948–991)

Summary

This sequence of parables and teachings from Rumi explores the tension between human effort and divine trust, between striving and surrender. It begins with the animals' spiritual argument: many who plant seeds of labour still go hungry, for only what God has written will bloom. This sets the stage for the tale of a man who flees from Azrael, the Angel of Death, asking King Solomon to send him to India, hoping to escape his fate. Yet by trying to escape, he runs straight into the place of his death, proving that no one can flee what has been written.

Azrael, in awe, reveals that his astonishment was not anger—he was witnessing the mystery of Divine decree unfold. Through this, Rumi reminds us: escape is an illusion. Fleeing from God is the only true calamity.

But the lion, representing the voice of noble action, reminds the assembly that the Prophets and Saints did strive, and their efforts bore fruit because their hearts were aligned with God. Thus, action that serves faith is not resistance to destiny—it is part of it.

Rumi then deepens the metaphor: this world is a prison, and our only wise strategy is to dig a path out, not to reinforce its walls. Wealth that distracts is ruin, but wealth used for God becomes a support. Like Solomon, who ruled without attachment, the truly poor are rich in spirit, floating calmly over the storms of life.

The poem concludes with a gentle affirmation: exertion is not illusion, but the very breath of the spiritual path, so long as it flows from a heart emptied of greed and filled with God's wind.

Poem Verses

The Beasts Respond with Trust

The beasts replied, one voice, one breath—
"How many men, how many women
have planted fields of effort,
yet reaped only dust?

From the dawn of time,
generations of clever ones,
their mouths gaping like dragons,
swallowed mountains with their schemes.

Their minds spun plans so fierce,
even the earth trembled—
yet nothing bore fruit,
unless it was written
in the scroll of eternity.

All their striving fell to dust,
but the Maker's will remained.

So, friend, don't be fooled—
effort is just a name.
And cleverness?

Only a tale we tell ourselves."

The Man Who Fled from Death

One morning, a noble man
burst into Solomon's court,
his face white with fear,
his lips drained of color.

"What is it?" asked the king.

"I saw Azrael," he gasped,
"his eyes burned with fury—
they struck terror in my soul.

Please," he begged,
"command the wind
to carry me far—
to India,
where maybe death
won't follow."

And so the wind
bore him swiftly
across sea and sand
to a distant land.

But know this:
fleeing poverty, too,
people chase illusions—
like running to India,
to escape the gaze of fate.

Azrael's Astonishment

The next day,
Solomon turned to Azrael:
"Why did you frighten that man?
He fled so far from home!"

Azrael replied,
"I wasn't angry—
I was surprised.

God told me:
'Today, take his soul in India.'
I thought,
'How can he be there,
unless he has wings of light?'

But look—he arrived!
Just in time."

Open your eyes,
and see—
in every matter of this world,
His decree unfolds.

Whom can we flee?
From ourselves?
Absurd.

From God?
That is no escape—
it is rebellion.

The Lion's Response: Exertion Renewed

Then the lion spoke:
"Yes, but look—
the Prophets, the Saints,
all toiled, all suffered—
in cold, in heat,
in chains of sorrow.

Their effort,
blessed by God,
turned to gold.

Their nets caught heaven's bird.
Their flaws
became perfections.

So strive,
while your breath still stirs.
This life is brief—
but joy eternal waits
for those who walk
the path of faith.

Don't wrap your head in bandages
if it's not yet broken.
Walk the Way,
laugh forever.

He who clings to the world
has chosen a crumbling nest.
But he who seeks the world beyond
has found a garden.

Plots to gain the world—
they scatter like wind.
But the plot to flee it—
that is God's whisper.

Digging Out of the Prison

The true plot?
To dig through the prison wall—
to break free.

If instead you seal the hole—
you're a fool.

This world?
It's the prison.
We, its prisoners.

Break the wall!
Escape to Him.

The world isn't gold or cloth,
not women or silver—
it's forgetting God.

But if you carry wealth
for God's sake,
then—yes—how good is wealth
for the righteous.

Water in the boat—

it sinks.
But beneath the boat—
it holds it up.

Solomon ruled the world,
yet he called himself
"the poor one,"
for his heart
was emptied of desire.

Like a jar sealed tight,
but filled with air,
he floated
on the ocean of this world.

The Wind of Poverty

Let the wind of poverty
fill your chest.
Let your heart
rise,
weightless
on the sea of life.

Though he owned the world,
it meant nothing—
not to his heart.

So seal the mouth
of your craving,
and breathe
from within.

Yes—
sickness, medicine,
effort, and rest—
they are real.

But even the one who denies
striving—
still strives,
in his denial.

The Hare's Hidden Wisdom

(Verses 992–1026)

Summary

In this section of the Masnavi, Rumi tells the tale of a lion and the animals who submit to him, offering one of their own each day to spare the rest. When the hare's turn comes, he questions the justice of this agreement and asks for time, not out of fear, but to save them all.

The hare, though small and mocked by the others, becomes a symbol of divinely inspired wisdom. His voice echoes the prophets—those who seem insignificant but carry truths from Heaven. Rumi reminds us that the spirit, not physical form, defines worth. Adam, a creature of the earth, was raised above the angels through knowledge. The bee, the silkworm, the cave dog—each teaches that God grants wisdom and light in unexpected vessels.

Rumi critiques superficial judgments and the limitations of sensory knowledge. He calls us to see with the light of the spirit, not the eye of the flesh. True insight is not in appearances or academic forms, but in the Divine jewel placed within the heart. The poem invites us to honour the soul's wisdom, especially when it comes cloaked in humility.

Poem Verses

The Lion's Bargain

The lion roared,
and with fierce proof,
shattered the beasts' excuses.
The fox, the deer,
the hare and the jackal
all surrendered their arguments—
gave up on fate,
and made a pact.

No longer needing to hunt,
the lion waited.
Each day, the chosen one
ran to him,
swift as a cheetah—
until the cup of death
came to the hare.

He cried out,
"How long shall we endure
this injustice?"

Blame from the Herd

The others turned on him.
"We've given our lives
in loyalty," they said.
"Don't ruin our name,
you rebel.
Don't provoke the lion.
Go! Hurry!"

The Hare's Plea

"O friends," said the hare,
"give me a little time.
Let my cleverness
save us all from this calamity—
not just today,
but for your children, too."

Every prophet
has called people
like this—
inviting them to safety
while appearing small,

like the dark pupil of an eye.

They saw only his size—
but not the power
hidden within the eye's core.

Doubt and Mockery

The animals mocked him.
"Stay in your place,
O foolish hare.
You think you can outdo
those greater than you?"

"You must be deluded,
or perhaps fate itself
is driving us toward doom,
if one like you
dares speak so boldly."

The Wisdom of the Small

But the hare answered gently:
"God whispered this into my heart.
Even a weak one
can receive mighty wisdom."

Does the lion know
what the bee knows—
how to make honeyed homes
from sweetness?
Did any elephant learn
the silkworm's hidden art?

From Earth to the Heavens

Adam, made of dust,
was taught by God.
And through that knowledge,
he shone to the highest Heaven.

He broke the pride
of the angels
and confounded
those who doubt God.

Iblīs, who worshipped for ages,
was muzzled
by a calf—
a young creation
of dust and light.

True Knowing

The sciences of the senses
are a muzzle.
They block
the milk of truth.

But deep in the heart's blood
God placed a jewel—
one not found
in seas or skies.

Why cling to form?
O form-worshipper,
has your soul not risen
beyond this shell?

If mere form made a man,
then Abū Jahl and Muhammad
would be equal.

The Spirit Shines

Look at the painting—
a beautiful image,
yet lifeless.

It is missing
what Adam had:
the spirit.

Go, seek
that rare jewel.

Even the proud lion's head
bows
to the dog of the Cave,
for that dog's soul
was drenched
in God's light.

What does the vessel matter,
when the soul is bathed
in Divine Light?

Beyond the Letter

Forms cannot describe
the true essence.
Even written words
like "learned" or "just"
are only hints
of a spiritual core—
a core found
nowhere in place or time.

The sun of spirit
pours light
upon the body
from a realm
beyond space.

It is not in the sky,
yet it burns brighter
than all stars.

The Wisdom of the Hare

(Verses 1027–1054)

Summary

This tale begins with a call to awaken an inner way of hearing—a spiritual perception that transcends the worldly ear. Rumi invites us to observe how a simple hare, through wisdom, challenges the might of a lion, demonstrating that true strength lies not in force but in subtle knowledge rooted in the spirit.

He affirms that knowledge is like the soul within the body—it animates and gives true dominion. Even the fierce and unseen forces that stalk human beings can only be responded to wisely through inner transformation. The seeker must wait patiently until the outer senses are transmuted into inner light, so they may discern which spiritual forces guide them.

When the animals ask the hare to reveal his plan, he declines. The hare, a symbol of subtle spiritual intelligence, knows the sacred weight of silence. Secrets, especially about one's path, wealth, or faith, are not for public trade. Rumi teaches through this allegory that divine wisdom often speaks in hints and riddles, veiling itself from the unaware while opening itself to the heart prepared by stillness and sincerity.

Even the Prophet (PBUH), Rumi, reminds us that, used indirect speech to preserve sacred truth from the corrupt. Only the attuned hearer perceives the fragrance of truth in such veiled language. Thus, Rumi invites us not to rush toward answers but to cultivate the inner ear that hears what is never spoken aloud.

Poem Verses

Listening with the Inner Ear

This story has no end—
but let your heart lean close
and listen.

The tale of a hare begins—
clever, watchful, wise.

Sell the ear that hears the world,
and buy the ear that hears the soul.
For the donkey's ear
cannot grasp
this kind of speech.

Come see
the foxlike tricks of this gentle one,
how the hare devised a plan
to snare a lion.

The Spirit Beyond the Form

Solomon's seal
was knowledge—
his kingdom sealed with it.

All the world is shape,
but knowledge
is the soul.

By this grace,
the beasts of sea and land
stand helpless before man.

Even the lion and the leopard
tremble before him—
like mice.

The river crocodile
turns pale and flees,
the jinn and fairies scatter
to their hiding places.

So many hidden foes
surround the human form.
The one who walks with care
walks wisely.

Invisible Forces at Play

Hidden beings,
good and evil,
strike at the heart
at every moment.

Step into the stream to cleanse
yourself—
and feel a thorn
you cannot see
cut your flesh.

You know it's there
because it hurts.

So too, the unseen prods
of angelic whispers
and satanic temptations—
come not from one,
but from a thousand veiled hands.

Wait—
until your senses are transformed,
so you might finally see
the source of those pricks,
and understand
whose voice you turned from,
whose hand you chose
to lead you.

Counsel Among the Beasts

Then the beasts gathered
and turned to the hare:
"Quick-footed one,
share what you see.

You faced the lion—
tell us your plan.

Counsel sharpens insight,
mind grows
when joined to mind.

Did not the Prophet say,
'O trusted one,
seek counsel—
for the one whose advice you seek
is your brother in truth'?"

Keeping the Secret Hidden

But the hare replied:
"Not every secret
should be spoken aloud.

Even numbers turn strange,
and odd ones
can become even.

Speak from innocence
to a mirror,
and see how it clouds—
its clarity gone.

Speak not
of your departure,
your wealth,
or your faith.

Many lie in wait
for these three.

Tell even one or two,
and your secret
runs loose into the world.

Veiled Conversations

Tie three birds together—
they cannot fly.
But
they still hold counsel—
quiet,
hidden,
their meaning
veiled in riddles.

So too, the Prophet spoke
in layered parables—
so that the enemy
might not know
what foot led which way.

The adversary answered him—
but never knew
the true scent
of the question.

The Lion's Lament and the Fly's Sea

(Verses 1055–1090)

Summary

In this tale, a lion—symbol of the ego—rages when the hare arrives late, revealing how pride and expectation fester into blame. Rumi quickly shifts from outer story to inner truth, warning against the illusion of words and names that lack real meaning. True wisdom comes only to those who seek beyond appearance and ego.

He criticizes those who pretend helplessness, urging instead real effort on the path, where Divine grace then meets human struggle. As understanding deepens, it bows before the Mystery, like Gabriel before the Prophet (PBUH).

Rumi warns against interpreting Divine truth through selfish desire, likening false interpreters to a fly imagining a puddle of urine as a vast sea. But

even this fly, if it follows true guidance, can become a humā—a radiant bird of transformation.

Ultimately, the poem teaches that truth is not found in appearances or opinions, but in surrender, effort, and the purifying fire of Divine love.

Poem Verses

The Lion Waits

The hare was late.
The lion, clawed king,
paced the earth,
roaring in rage.

"I knew," he growled,
"The words of the weak
would collapse like dry reeds—
empty, vain,
never fulfilled.

Deceived again
by their honeyed lies—
O Time,
how long will you make a fool of me?"

A prince without wisdom,
still soft in the beard,
looks neither ahead nor behind—
and is left
crushed by his own naivety.

Names Without Essence

The road seems smooth,
yet hidden beneath—pitfalls.
Beneath fine names
lurks hollowness.

Words are traps.
sweet flattery,
a thirstless sand
drinking the water of life.

But rare is the sand
from which water flows—
seek that spring.

Whoever truly seeks wisdom
becomes its fountain.
Beyond needing tools,
he drinks straight from the Source.

The Preserved Tablet,
once just a guarded record,
becomes the keeper of mysteries.

When Wisdom Teaches Itself

Once your mind
is taught by truth itself,
the mind becomes
its own pupil.

Then it speaks like Gabriel:
"O Muhammad—
I cannot go further.
One more step
and I burn.
This is my limit.
O soul's king,
go on alone."

On False Helplessness

He who avoids
gratitude and patience
clings only
to the excuse of "necessity."

Such a man—
feigning illness—
is soon buried
by the lie he tells.

The Prophet said,
"Joking about sickness
can make it real—
a fool dies like a fading lamp."

Necessity (jabr) means to bind
what's truly broken.
But if you haven't walked the path,
why wear the bandage?

Effort Meets Grace

But one who breaks himself
on the path of effort—
to him comes Burāq,
the celestial steed.

He who bore the religion
becomes carried by it.
He who obeyed the command
becomes the one chosen.

He took orders—
now he delivers them.
Once ruled by the stars,
now he rules them.

Faith Beyond Reason

If this baffles you—
so be it.
But then you'll doubt
that the moon
was ever split.

Renew your faith,
not with speech,
but by cleansing your desires.

While desire is fresh,

faith cannot be.
Desire
is the bolt
that seals the gate.

Don't Distort the Book—Change Yourself

You twist the pure Word
to fit your whims.
Don't warp the Qur'an—
bend yourself instead.

When you interpret the Book
to please your lower self,
you degrade its majesty.

The Fly's Illusion

A fly,
floating on a straw
in a puddle of donkey's urine,
imagined himself a captain.

"Behold," he said,
"My sea, my ship—
I, the pilot!"

The puddle,
vast to him,
was his endless ocean.
No eye
could see past his illusion.

His sea
was as wide
as his mind was small.

So too
the false interpreter:
His "Qur'an"
is as foul as his own thinking.

True Meaning Needs True Eyes

But if the fly stops guessing,
and follows the sign—
he becomes a humā,
a royal bird of joy.

Those who carry
this Divine hint
are no longer flies.
Their spirits
are not bound
to outward form.

The Lion's Roar and the Hidden Light

(Verses 1091–1135)

Summary

In this passage, Rumi unveils the soul's confusion and the veils that block it from seeing Divine Truth. The lion, burning with spiritual anger, exposes the empty philosophies that bind and blind the spirit—mere skins without substance. He calls for a deeper seeing, beyond clever words to the living core of meaning.

Rumi explores the illusions of the senses, reminding us that all colour and form depend on light, just as spiritual truth depends on the Divine Light, not intellect or desire. Yet God, having no opposite, remains hidden to the senses, seen only through the unveiling of the heart.

Through stories of a rider unaware he's on his horse, and the ocean of Reason that tosses aside shallow forms, Rumi points us back to what is always near: the Divine. The soul's task is not to search outward, but to awaken inward—to see the light that was always there.

Poem Verses

The Lion's Outcry

The lion growled,
his heart scorched with rage—
"Because I listened,
they've blinded my eyes.

Those who claim
'all is compelled'—
their dead philosophies
have bound me with ropes of
wood,
wounding me with a sword
that's not even real.

No more of their arguments,
no more of their spells.
Their words are like ghosts—
no truth in their cry."

Cut Through the Skin

O my heart,
rip through their lies.
Tear the skin off,
for skin is all they are.

Skin is just talk—
ripples on water,
soon gone.

True meaning is a kernel,
hidden deep.
Words are the shell.
Their purpose—
to veil or to protect.

Bad fruit wears
a perfect rind.
Good seeds, too,
hide inside husks.

Fleeting Ink

When the pen is the wind
and the scroll is water,
whatever you write
is soon erased.

You write upon water—
and hope for it to last?

You'll return,
biting your hand in regret.

Wind in the soul—
this is vanity, desire.
Let it go.

Then the message of God
will come.
And it will last—
sweet from beginning to end.

What Remains

Sermons of kings pass away.
Their empires crumble.
But the words of prophets—
remain.

Why?
Because the glory of kings
rises from dust.
But the prophets—
their light comes
from the Majesty of God.

Coins forget the names of kings,
but the name of Ahmad (peace be
upon him)
is pressed into every soul.

For his name
holds the names
of all the prophets.
When you reach one hundred,
ninety is already there.

The Ocean of Reason

Now,
the hare delayed,
thinking of tricks
to whisper in the lion's ear.

He rehearsed
each clever plan
along the road.

Think—
what worlds move
within the ocean of Reason!

Our forms—
cups floating on its surface.
They drift,
until they fill,
and then they sink.

This Reason—
it's hidden.
We only see
the spray.
We are nothing
but its waves.

The Lost Horse

The form tries
to reach Reason.
But Reason
flings the form aside.

Until the heart sees
the Giver of its voice—
until the arrow sees
the Archer—
it wanders,
crying,
"My horse is gone!"

But all along,
he rides that horse
like the wind.

He knocks on every door—
“Who stole my horse?”
O rider,
look down.

That horse
you’re chasing—
you’re riding it.

Too Close to See

The spirit is hidden
because it’s too near.
You are full of water,
yet your lips stay dry.

You see colors—
red, green, gold—
but only because
there is light.

Lose the light,
and colors vanish.
So the colors
have veiled the light.

Only in darkness
do you see:
what you saw
was only from light.

The Light Within

The outer light
is from sun and star.
But the inner light
is from the Divine.

The light in the eye
is born of the heart.
The heart's light
is from God alone.

That light
is beyond
the reach of mind or sense.

When night falls,

you see no color—
so you know
color was never the truth.

Hidden by the Infinite

God created sorrow
so you'd know joy.
He reveals the hidden
through its opposite.

But God—
He has no opposite.
So He remains unseen.

You saw color
because you saw light.
You know joy
because of pain.
But you cannot know God
by contrast—
there's nothing
to compare.

So He is hidden.
Yet He sees all.

Remember Sinai.
Even Moses
could not bear
His unveiled Light.

Waves Returning to the Sea

(Verses 1136–1149)

Summary

This passage is a meditation on the nature of thought, speech, and form—all of which Rumi shows to be ephemeral manifestations of a deeper, unseen reality. Everything that appears—whether sound, word, or body—is but a wave rising from the infinite sea of Spirit and returning to it. Thought itself, he says, is like an arrow sent from Hū (a sacred name for God, referring to the unknowable Divine Essence), only to return to its Source. Even time, which seems so steady and linear, is the swift and ever-renewing pulse of Divine creativity.

Rumi reminds us that nothing lasts in its current form; everything dissolves and is reborn in every instant. This is not a cause for sorrow, but for wonder. Formlessness, the Divine, is where all begins and ends. The Prophet

Muhammad's (PBUH) saying that "this world is but a moment" underscores the message: all that is seen is passing. What matters is the unseen Source behind it all. To understand this, Rumi points to his beloved companion Husām al-Dīn as the embodiment of this wisdom—a living book in whom this mystery is made manifest.

Poem Verses

The Root Beneath All Form

Know this—
every form is born
from spirit.

Just as a lion
leaps forth from the forest,
or voice rises
from the sea of thought.

You hear the voice,
but the thought—
its origin—
remains unseen.

Still,
if the waves are beautiful,
can you doubt the nobility
of the ocean beneath?

From the sea of Wisdom
came these surging thoughts,
and Wisdom itself
cast them
into the shape of speech.

All Forms Die Into Their Source

Form
is born from the Word
and dies again.

The wave returns—
silent,
folding back
into the vast sea.

Form
emerges
from the formless
and melts back into it.

For truly—
Innā li'Llāh wa innā ilayhi
rājiʿūn—
"To Him we are returning."

In every breath,
you are dying,
and being reborn.

The Prophet,
the Chosen One,
called this world
a fleeting moment.

The Arrow of Thought Returns

Each thought—
a feathered arrow
shot from the unseen,
from Hū,
the One Who Is.

It flies through
the air of desire,
but never stays there.

Inevitably,
it turns back,
returning
to God.

The world, too,
is made anew
in every moment—
yet we see only
its unchanging face.

The Stream of Life

Life
arrives fresh
like water through a stream.

Though it flows
through the same body,
it is never
the same water.

Its rapid motion
makes it seem
continuous—
like a spark
spun swiftly
into a ring of fire.

This illusion of time,
of permanence,
comes from the speed
of Divine action.

Even the wisest among us,
in pursuit of this mystery,
are told—
Look to Husām al-Dīn,
He is the book you seek.

The Hare and the Lion's Snare

(Verses 1150–1201)

Summary

In this tale, Rumi recounts the cunning of a small hare who, sent to the lion as tribute, arrives late and stirs the lion's rage. Boldly, the hare tells a tale of another lion—an arrogant rival who ambushed him and his companion. The hare pleads for justice and guides the lion to a well, where he tricks him into seeing his own reflection as the intruder. In a fit of pride and fury, the lion leaps and drowns.

The hare becomes a symbol of cleverness, humility, and trust in Divine support. The lion represents unchecked power and ego, blind to deception and spiritual truth. Through this fable, Rumi weaves a deeper parable: those who

become friends with envy, or trust their lower self, fall like Pharaoh or Nimrod—mighty in form, but defeated by unseen forces.

Ultimately, Rumi turns our gaze inward. In a world of illusion, where poison may look like candy and enemies speak as friends, our only refuge is in God. Only through prayer, humility, and the shedding of pride can we hope to see clearly and avoid mistaking a well of destruction for a pool of truth.

Poem Verses

Approaching the Lion

The lion, fierce and furious,
spotted the hare from afar—
bold, unshaken,
storm in his step,
face drawn like thunder.

He thought,
"If I crawl in fear, he'll doubt me.
But if I stride like fire,
his suspicions will burn away."

As the hare came near
the lion's den of might,
the king roared—
"You, scoundrel!
I've torn oxen apart,
I've humbled elephants...
What makes you,
a scrap of fur and trembling flesh,
dare ignore my summons?"

The Hare's Plea

"Mercy, O King,"
the hare cried,
"Grant me pardon,
I bear a tale!"

"What tale?" roared the lion.
"An excuse from a fool?
Know this: a fool's excuse
is worse than his crime.
It is poison to wisdom.
You dare show your face,
untimely and senseless?
You deserve no hearing."

The hare bowed,
"Even a fool,
wronged and wandering,
deserves one ear.

O King,
even the vast sea
cradles filth on its face.
Your grace is not lessened
by lifting the lowly."

The lion growled,
"I give where it's due—
tailor gifts to size."

"Then strike me down,"
the hare said,
"but first hear my truth.
I left at dawn
with another hare,
your servant too.
We came as one.

But on the road,
a lion, stranger and wild,
leapt from the rocks
and seized us both."

A Rival King

"We cried,
'We are slaves of the true King,
we serve the Lion of Light.'
He mocked—
'Your king? I know no such name.
Turn back, or be torn apart.'

I begged,
'Let me return and deliver your
words.'
He snarled,
'Leave your friend as pledge,
or die here beneath my claws.'
He refused all prayer,
and seized my companion—
larger, stronger, more fair than I.
Now the road is blocked,
your allowance lost."

To the Trap

"Show me!" the lion roared,
"Guide me to this imposter!
If your tale is true,
he'll taste my wrath.
If false, so will you."

The hare led on—
sure-footed,
his heart cloaked in guile.
He brought the lion
to the edge of a well—
deep, silent,
his trap laid.

Who would think
a blade of straw
could fell a mountain?

But the hare's trick
was a noose for pride—

a drop of wit
that drowned a king.

Lessons in Shadows

See the state of Pharaoh,
who hearkened to Haman;
see the end of Nimrod,
who listened to Satan.

Heed the fate of one
who trusts an enemy's word.
It is a hidden snare,
though it speaks of grain.
Even sweet words
may mask a knife.

When fate arrives,
you will not know
foe from friend.

So pray.
Cry out to the One
who sees all veils:
"O Source of lion and lamb,
if we've strayed,
do not let wrath
strike from the dark."

Let not fire wear water's dress,
nor water disguise itself as flame.

When drunk on Your wrath,
we see nothing—
stones gleam like gems,
dust like treasure.

This is the blindness
of Divine intoxication—
when the senses turn
and tamarisk becomes sandalwood.

When Destiny Darkens the Eye

(Verses 1202–1233)

Summary

This radiant tale unfolds in the mystic court of Solomon, who—like a prophet-king of the soul—understands the language of all beings. Each bird approaches him, not in vanity, but in reverent hope of closeness, revealing their hidden talents. When the humble hoopoe declares his ability to see hidden waters beneath the earth, he is challenged by a jealous crow who mocks him for once being trapped in a snare.

Solomon's initial skepticism serves as the backdrop for a more profound spiritual teaching. The hoopoe, wounded yet faithful, replies with clarity: not all failure is due to ignorance or deceit; sometimes, it is the veil of Divine destiny (qadar) that blinds even the wise. In Sufi cosmology, destiny is not an impersonal

force but the active will of God. The hoopoe declares that even disbelief in destiny itself arises by God's decree—an affirmation of the all-encompassing nature of Divine will (tawḥīd).

The core lesson here is a subtle one: don't judge by appearances, for the workings of Divine destiny often transcend reason. True wisdom bows to the mystery of God, while arrogance, like the crow's, resists what it cannot control. The hoopoe becomes a symbol of spiritual insight and submission, a faithful servant in both light and shadow.

Poem Verses

The Court of Birds

When Solomon pitched his silken tent,
the birds came in reverent flight—
one by one, drawn like moths
to the glow of his knowing.

He spoke their secret tongues—
not a chirp or rustle escaped his ear.
Even their silences
were more eloquent to him
than a brother's words.

To speak the same language
is not the deepest kinship;
true nearness comes
when hearts beat as one.

Many share a tongue
but remain strangers—
while others, without speech,
share a single soul.

Each bird unfolded
its gifts and wisdom,
not in pride,
but in yearning—
hoping the King would let them
dwell near his majesty.

They praised themselves humbly,
as captives do—
not to boast,
but to be chosen.

The Hoopoe's Gift

Then came the turn
of the small and feather-crowned
hoopoe.

"O King," he said,
"I shall name just one skill—
a lesser one,
yet worthy of mention.

At high noon,
from my place in the sky,
I pierce the veil of dust
and glimpse the waters
buried beneath the earth.

I see their depths,
their hue,
their birthplace—
whether clay or stone gave them
birth.

Keep me close, O Solomon,
as your guide through parched
lands—
I am your companion in deserts
where no spring sings."

The King replied:
"Blessed friend,
in the trackless wastes,
you are a wellspring of wisdom."

Envy's Interruption

But a crow, thick with envy,
hopped forward and cried,
"He lies!
Such talk is unfit for a king's ear.

If his sight were so sharp,
would he not have seen the snare
hidden under dust?

Would he have stumbled into the
cage
so easily,
so foolishly?"

Solomon turned,
his gaze steady:
"O hoopoe,
is this how your wine shows itself?

You've only drunk buttermilk,
yet you strut like a drunkard
before my throne?"

The Hoopoe's Defense

The hoopoe bowed his head:
"O King,
for God's sake,
do not let the enemy's whisper
cloud your judgment of me.

If I speak falsely,
strike off this head—
I place it at your feet.

But this crow—

he mocks Divine decree.
He believes only in cause,
not in the Causer.

Even if he had a thousand minds,
he'd still be blind.

When destiny comes,
the eye of the wise is veiled,
reason sleeps,
the moon turns dark,
and the sun forgets how to shine.

This blindness is not a fault—
it is the hand of God
casting a veil.

Even disbelief
is woven by the Weaver's will."

The Names That Dwell Within

(Verses 1234–1262)

Summary

This passage unfolds a luminous reflection on the story of Adam, honoured as the first receptacle of Divine knowledge. God taught Adam the "Names," meaning the inward realities of all beings, not just their outward labels. What Adam named, he saw in truth, not with the veiled perception of this world, but with the Light of Divine clarity. Even future destinies were unveiled to him: the eventual believer and disbeliever alike were already known.

Yet even with this immense knowledge, Adam faltered when Divine decree cloaked his perception. Faced with a single prohibition—do not eat of the wheat—he hesitated, questioning whether it was a command or open to interpretation. This moment of bewilderment allowed the "thief," a symbol of

Shayṭān (Satan), to enter. Adam's cry of repentance reveals the archetypal human fall: not simply error, but the spiritual amnesia that comes from separation from God's direct Light.

Destiny (qadar) in Rumi's telling is both shadow and salvation. It can veil the truth, but also leads the soul home. Even in our darkest bewilderments, Divine mercy is already at work—first as hardship, then as healing. The tale ends by preparing the reader for the next allegory—the story of the hare and the lion—another parable of divine cunning and spiritual awakening.

Poem Verses

The Adam of Light

In every vein of the First Man
were hidden the thousand
sciences—
every name, every essence,
shining as it truly is.

Each thing he named,
remained what he saw—
"brisk" stayed brisk,
"lazy" did not pretend.

The believer-to-be,
he saw as already faithful.
The future disbeliever—
he recognized even then.

The Secret of Naming

Hear the names from one
who truly Knows.
Not just outward forms,
but the essence behind the veil.
With us, names are surface;
with God, they are soul.

To Moses, his staff
was just a stick.
To the Creator,
it breathed as a dragon.

'Umar, to men, was once
an idol-worshipper—
but in Alast*,
he was already believer.

What you call "seed" now,
God called "you"—
even then.

The Divine View

That seed—
a form in unseen potential,
already complete
in God's knowing gaze.

What we become
is who we were
in the eyes of the Beloved.

God names us
not for our passing states,
but for the end we are drawn
toward.

The Veil of Destiny

Adam saw with a Light
so pure,
it revealed the souls
within every name.

Even the angels bowed—
they glimpsed God's Light
shining through his clay.

Still...
when the decree descended,
even he
fell into a single doubt.

He wondered—
was this command final,
or did it allow interpretation?

His nature wavered,
and wandered toward wheat.

The Slip and the Cry

When a thorn pierced
the gardener's heel,
the thief found his chance—
and stole the shop.

But when confusion cleared,
Adam turned,
and saw the loss.

He cried,
"O Lord,
we have done wrong..."
Alas!—the night fell,
and the path was lost.

The Cloud of Decree

This divine decree—
a cloud across the sun—
turns lions to mice.

Even I, the hoopoe,
cannot see a snare
when destiny descends.

But blessed is he
who lets go of pride,

and takes to humble prayer.

At the End, Grace

If destiny veils you
in night-black sorrow,
still it will take your hand
and guide you home.

If it wounds you a hundred times,
it will also
be your healing.

If it strikes,
it will still raise your tent
on the heights of Heaven.

This too is mercy—
to terrify you,
that you may awaken
into peace.

This tale continues without end—
but for now,
listen to the story
of the hare and the lion...

The Lion and the Silent Mirror

(Verses 1263–1308)

Summary

In this parable from the Masnavi, a clever hare encounters a fierce lion who demands to know why the hare has fallen behind. The hare, filled with fear, describes the overwhelming dread he feels—his very being undone by the signs of Divine majesty that ripple through creation. Everything in the cosmos, from stars to soil, he says, trembles before God's decree. He uses this truth as both explanation and subtle teaching, reminding the lion that all things—powerful or weak—are ultimately subject to Divine command.

When the lion presses further, the hare reveals his cunning: another lion, he claims, lives in the well, causing his hesitation. The lion, proud and ready to dominate, demands to confront this rival. When he peers into the well, he sees

only his reflection and, mistaking it for another lion, leaps to attack—falling to his death.

This tale is rich with Sufi insight. The hare embodies the soul awakened to signs (āyāt) of Divine reality, while the lion stands for the nafs—the proud self—unaware it is facing its image. The well reflects the truth, and those who cannot see with the inner eye are doomed to destroy themselves by chasing shadows. It is a teaching about humility, the limits of perception, and how ego blinds us to the reality that we are often our own worst enemy.

Poem Verses

The Trembling Hare

When the lion neared the well,
he saw the hare had slowed,
his steps retreating,
his breath caught in fear.

"Why do you hesitate?"
the lion asked.
"Come forward.
Do not draw back."

The hare, his voice shaking,
replied:
"O King, I cannot walk.
My limbs have left me—
even my soul trembles,
my heart has flown."

"Look at my face—
the pale gold of fear.
This color speaks,
revealing the ruin within."

"God made signs
to speak truth.
To the knower,
a scent or a shade
is a bell of knowing."

"A neigh tells of a horse,
a bray speaks of an ass.
Everything sings its essence—
if you have the ear."

Unveiling the Signs

The Prophet said:
"A man is veiled
until his tongue moves."

But look at me,

my color confesses—
have mercy,
plant a seed of tenderness
in your lion-heart.

A red face means joy,
but mine—ashen,
whispers of pain,
and a patience
fraying at the edge.

"Something has struck me—
a force that robbed my limbs,
drained my color,
broke every sign in me."

"It shattered tree and stone,
silenced beast and man,
even the heavens bend to it."

The World in Tremor

"All creation,
minerals and men,
plants and stars—
none escape this blow."

"Gardens bloom,
then wither.
The sun rises proud,
then dives
headlong into silence."

"The moon, once radiant,
sickens like a fevered ghost.
The earth—so calm—
shudders
under hidden tremors."

"Even mountains—
strong and still—
have become dust
before this sorrow."

"Air itself,
breath of spirit,
can turn bitter
when God's decree arrives."

"Sweet waters spoil,
fire dies
from a single wind."

"The sea is restless,
its face changes
like a troubled mind."

Reflection of the Whole

"The sky, ever turning,
seeks and circles,
carrying fortune
and misfortune
in its stars."

"Look at yourself,

O lion—part of this wholeness.
Do you think the parts
can escape
what the whole suffers?"

"You are earth, fire,
water, and wind—
made of contraries,
a harmony borrowed
for a brief moment."

"It is no wonder
the sheep fled the wolf.
The real wonder
is that we ever made peace
with the predator at all."

"Life is a truce
between opposites.
Death is their war."

"Only God's grace
holds peace between lion and wild
ass."

A Prison of Passing Things

"This world is a sickbed,
a prison.
Should the prisoner
not feel faint?"

"That is why I lag behind,
bound by the weight
of what I see."

The Well of Illusion

The lion, puzzled, asked,
"Tell me—what has
truly made you so weak?"

The hare replied:
"A lion lives
within that well.
He sits
safe in the fortress of solitude."

"Every wise one knows—
joy dwells
in retreat from the world."

"The dark of the well
is sweeter
than the shadow of this world.
Following the world
leads only to loss."

The Fall

"Come now," the lion said.
"My blow will silence him.
Let us see if he's there now."

The hare trembled.
"I am too afraid—
unless I walk beside you,

under your mercy,
mine of generosity."

"Then maybe,
with you near,
I'll dare to look."

So the lion took him close,
and they walked together
toward the deep well.

When they reached its edge,
they looked into the water.

There—reflected—
was the lion himself,
a fierce form
with a fat hare at his side.

He roared,
thinking the image was another
beast,
an enemy mocking him.

With fury,
he leapt into the well—
and was swallowed
by his own illusion.

Thus he fell
into the trap
his pride had dug.

The Mirror in the Well

(Verses 1309–1338)

Summary

In this passage, Rumi explores the deeply Sufi teaching that what we condemn in others is often a reflection of ourselves. Through the parable of the lion attacking his reflection in a well, he teaches that our rage and judgment usually spring from projections—shadows of our unacknowledged faults. What we perceive as ugliness in another is often a reflection of our iniquity.

The poor and oppressed are under Divine protection—when they cry out, the entire celestial order responds. In contrast, those who act unjustly ensnare themselves. Rumi reminds us that God's justice is perfectly tailored: the deeper the wrongdoing, the darker and more entrapping its spiritual consequences.

The Prophet's (PBUH) saying that "the believer is the mirror of his brother" forms the heart of the teaching here. Only through humility, self-awareness, and Divine light can we remove the colored lenses through which we judge the world. Rumi urges us to let God's mercy cool our inner fire, transformed into light, not by our effort, but by Divine grace. This is the path from blindness to vision, from judgment to compassion, from projection to self-knowing.

Poem Verses

A Dark Well for the Unjust

Each act of injustice
is a rope lowered
into a dark, bottomless well.

The deeper your cruelty,
the deeper the pit you dig—
Divine Justice shapes the
punishment
to mirror the sin.

When you dig a trap for others,
you are digging your own grave.
Like the silkworm spinning its
cocoon,
you wrap yourself in your doing.

O oppressor—
do not think the weak stand alone.
Remember: "When the help of
God shall come..."
That is the Qur'anic promise.

Even if you are mighty—an
elephant—
and your victim flees,
the birds will come against you in
flocks.

The Heaven Hears the Cry

When the poor are wronged
and whisper for mercy,
the heavens shake.

Hurt him with your teeth—
and your own jaw
will throb in torment.

The Lion in the Well

The lion, peering into a well,
saw his reflection.
Blind with rage,
he mistook his image
for an enemy
and leapt to strike—

falling into himself.

So too,
the ugliness you see in others
is often your own shadow.

The face you scorn
is your own hidden face.
The curses you throw
come spinning back
like stones off a wall.

Who is the Enemy?

If only you could see yourself
clearly—
you would flee your own cruelty.
Like the lion,
you're attacking yourself,
striking at your own chest.

When you reach the bottom of
yourself,
you'll discover:
what you hated
was always within you.

Reflections All Around

At last, the lion saw—
the enemy was none but himself.

To pull the teeth from the poor
is to strike at your own soul.

You see ugliness
in your uncle's face—
but it is you who wear the blue
glass.

The true believer
is a mirror to his brother—
the Prophet said so.

The world appears blue
because you wear tinted lenses.

Take them off.
The color is yours,
not the world's.

Light and Fire

The believer sees
by the Light of God—
he sees clearly
what others only guess.

But if you gaze through fire—
even fire sent by God—
you won't know right from wrong.

Let water fall on your fire,
so it may become light.

O Lord,
send the water that purifies.

Let this inner fire
become Your radiance.

The oceans answer to Your
command.
Water and fire are Yours, O Lord.

If You will it,
fire becomes sweet, clear water.
If You do not will it,
water itself turns to flame.

This very seeking in my soul
is a gift You have already given.
Deliverance from darkness
is Yours to grant.

Before I knew how to search,
You placed the search within me—
one more gift from a treasury
that has no number and no end.

The Hare Dances Free

(Verses 1339–1372)

Summary

In this passage from the Masnavi, Rumi retells the fable where a clever hare escapes a tyrant lion by tricking him into a well. But beyond the animal tale, this is a luminous parable of spiritual liberation and the fall of the ego. The lion represents the nafs—the lower self, arrogant and violent—while the hare symbolizes subtle intelligence inspired by Divine grace.

When the lion falls, the hare rejoices like the soul freed from the body. All creation echoes this liberation: trees dance, leaves rise, and spirits ascend in the wind of Love. The other animals welcome the hare as a saint or angel, and he humbly attributes his success to God alone. The poem closes with a deeper

teaching: the world's thrones rise and fall, but those who give up temporal intoxication will taste the wine of Paradise.

This is a teaching on tawḥīd (Divine Unity), surrender, and the defeat of the ego through Divine plan and grace, not force. The lion perishes not by battle, but by illusion—just as our lower self collapses when faced with the mirror of truth.

Poem Verses

Joy Beyond the Well

The hare, freed from the lion's
jaws,
leapt through the sunlit desert—
a skip, a spin,
like leaves set loose in spring.

He clapped his hands,
alive again,
air in his lungs,
the dust behind him.

The earth released its greenest
branches,
bough and leaf
rose from prison,
became companions of the wind.

Newborn leaves burst from wood,
eager to reach heaven.
And every tree, every fruit,
in the secret tongue of roots and
seeds,
whispered thanks:

"The Generous One gave us life.
We were clay—
He made us rise."

So too, the souls once bound in
dust,
when loosed from form,
dance in the sky of Love—
shining, whole,
round as the moon.

Their limbs move in joy,
but their spirits—
no words for that.
Even what delights their spirits—
don't ask...

The Lion Shamed

The hare cast the lion into a well.

O shame—
a king undone by a rabbit!

Still he dares to be called
"Glory of the Faith"?
Lying there,
alone,
in the well of
"how could this be?"
"why did this happen?"

While his hare-like ego—
that small, sly self—
feasts free across the plain.

A Cry of Gladness

The hare, triumphant,
rushed to the others,
crying out,

"Rejoice, O friends—
the bringer of joy has come!

Good news!
The hell-hound is in Hell.

Good news!
The slayer of your kin—
his teeth pulled out
by the hand of God.

That clawed tyrant—
Death's broom
swept him off
like dust."

The Circle of Praise

The animals gathered,
hearts light,
faces bright.

They made a ring around the
hare—
a candle at the center,
they bowed in joy and awe.

"Are you an angel, or a hidden
saint?
No,
you're the Azrael
of tyrant kings."

Whatever you are—
we give our souls for you.
You've done what none could do.
Health to your hands,
blessings on your arms—

God poured power into your
stream.
Now tell us—

how did you plan it?
What was the trick?

Tell us!
Let the tale soothe our wounds,
salve our hearts."

The Hare Speaks

He said,
"O noble friends,
it was not my doing.
It was God—
He lit my heart
and gave strength to my limbs.

He raises the low,
and casts down the mighty.
So don't cling to the crown
that changes hands.

If you are a servant
of changing fate,
don't pretend to be free.

But some—
they have a kingdom
beyond change,
beyond the stars.

They live with the Cupbearer,
forever circling.

So—
if you leave behind
this fleeting wine,
even for a day or two,
you'll drink
from the river
of Paradise."

The Greater Battle Within

(Verses 1373–1389)

Summary

This passage unfolds as a profound meditation on the inner battle, what the Prophet (PBUH) referred to as the "greater Jihād." After returning victorious from outward warfare, Rumi reminds us that the real enemy is not external, but the inner self—the nafs—which is likened to Hell, endlessly devouring and never satisfied. This self is fiery, insatiable, and deeply deceptive, incapable of being subdued by reason or strategy alone.

God alone can quell this fire, just as He stills Hell with His divine command. The image of God placing His foot on Hell is not physical but metaphysical—an expression of ultimate Divine authority over the lower self. Only when we align

with that authority, becoming like a straight arrow—sincere, purified, and directed—can we escape the crookedness of ego and illusion.

The true hero, then, is not the one who conquers others in battle, but the one who roots out the mountain of ego with the needle of Divine remembrance. This is the essence of the Sufi path: to annihilate the self (fanā') so that only God remains.

Poem Verses

Returning from War

O kings,
we have defeated the outer foe—
but still within us
a fiercer enemy remains.

To overcome him
is not a task for logic or wit.
The lion within
cannot be tamed by the cunning of
a hare.

The Self as Hell

This carnal self—this nafs—
is Hell itself.
And like Hell,
its fire will not be quenched
by seas of reason,
or oceans of desire's fulfillment.

Feed it the Seven Seas—
still it burns.
It consumes stones,
it devours hearts hardened in
disbelief—
and still it hungers.

Even after all this,
a voice is heard,
a divine call:

"Are you full?"
And it cries,
"Not yet!
I am fire—
and fire only longs to burn."

The Divine Foot

It swallowed worlds,
and still its belly roared:
"Is there more?"

Then—

from a realm beyond place and time,
God placed His Foot upon it.
At His command—Be!—
the blaze fell silent.

This self is a portion of that Hell.
Every part reflects the whole.
And only God's foot
can crush its fire.

Who else
could draw such a bow?
The self is a crooked bow—
only straight arrows
can fly from it.

The Way of the Straight

Be straight, like an arrow—
and you'll be free
of this twisted bow.

When I turned away
from fighting on the battlefield,
I turned toward the war within.

We returned
from the lesser struggle.
Now we fight the greater Jihād—
with the Prophet,
inwardly.

I ask God
for strength,
for aid,
and for the grace
to boast not in conquest—
but in pulling this mountain of the self
down with a single needle.

Don't call a man a lion
because he tears through enemy lines.
The true lion
is the one who conquers himself.

Beneath the Palm, the Hidden Throne

(Verses 1390–1425)

Summary

In this parable from Rumi's Masnavi, an ambassador from the Byzantine Empire travels to Medina in search of the mighty Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Expecting a palace and worldly grandeur, he is shocked to learn that the ruler he seeks lives in simplicity—his "palace" being the luminous spirit itself. These words pierce the ambassador's heart, and he begins an urgent, almost ecstatic search for 'Umar, shedding the baggage of rank and reason.

He finally discovers 'Umar not in royal robes, but asleep beneath a palm tree—unguarded, unarmed, and wrapped in the serenity of one who fears only God. Struck by a tremor of sacred awe, the envoy realizes he is in the presence of a man whose humility unveils Divine majesty. In this scene, Rumi portrays true

leadership not through dominion but through inward illumination. The narrative reveals that spiritual vision—baṣīrah—is not found in appearances, but in the purity of the heart, and that proximity to God renders one both hidden and powerful. This is the essence of the Awliyā', the Friends of God—unknown to the world, yet known by their fragrance.

Poem Verses

A Stranger in Search of a King

Across the desert's breathless span,
an envoy came—
from Rūm to Medina,
to find the Caliph of the age.

"Show me the palace of the
Commander of the Faithful,"
he said, holding his reins and dust-
laden bags.
But the people only smiled,
"He has no palace," they told him.
"'Umar's palace is made of light—
its walls rise from the spirit,
its ceiling is humility,
its floor is the earth beneath his
feet."

He is the Commander,
yet his dwelling is a hut,
bare as the poor,
shining with something
you cannot see.

How will you see such a palace,
when the heart's eye is blind,
clouded with the hair of ego
and the dust of desire?

Cleansing the Inner Eye

Scrub the heart's mirror
of its faults and distractions,
and then you'll glimpse
the house of God's beloved.

Whoever burns away
the smoke of appetite,
will find in every direction—
the Face of God.

When Muhammad was pure
of self's illusion,
he saw only Allah—
whichever way he turned.

But how will you perceive

"There is the Face of God,"
when you're still flirting
with whispers from Shayṭān?

The one whose chest is opened by
light,
sees the sun rise
from every city and every face.

Seeing Through the Veil

God is revealed—
like the moon among stars.
Place two fingers on your eyes—
do you deny the world
just because you cannot see?
Remove the veil of self,
and all becomes clear.

The people of Noah
once mocked him,
"Where is this promise from God?"
But their cloaks wrapped around
their faces—
they had eyes,
yet they refused to see.

Man is sight—
the rest is skin.
Without vision of the Beloved,
the eye is best closed.
And if the beloved is not Eternal,
better it remain hidden.

Longing Awakens the Heart

The ambassador listened,
and his heart ignited.
He forgot his horse,
his burdens, his rank—
only one desire burned:
to find ʻUmar.

He wandered madly,
asking every passerby,
"Can one so rare
walk unseen upon this earth?"

He longed not to serve an empire,
but to become a slave
to this hidden Friend of God.

The Palm and the Shadow

At last, a desert woman noticed
him,
"Are you seeking ʻUmar?" she
asked.
"Look there—beneath that palm
tree.
He rests alone,
the Shadow of God
asleep in the shade."

The envoy stood at a distance,
gazing upon ʻUmar—
and trembled.

Not from fear of man,
but from the sweetness
of sacred awe.

Love and reverence
joined in his heart,
two rivers meeting.

"I have faced kings,"
he whispered to himself.
"I've walked calmly into courts,
through jungles of lions,
across the rage of war—
never have I trembled.

But this man,
bare on the earth,
unarmed, asleep...
he has shaken me to the bone."

No, this is not the fear of men—
it is the awe of God.
For those who fear Him truly,
strike fear into all who see them.

When Spirit Enters the Cage

(Verses 1426–1462)

Summary

This radiant passage unfolds a deeply mystical encounter between the ambassador of Rūm and the Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, a saintly figure in the Sufi tradition. The ambassador, a seeker beneath a stranger's guise, approaches in humility and fear. 'Umar, embodying the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings and God's mercy, comforts him with gentleness, wisdom, and spiritual vision.

What follows is not a political discourse, but a teaching on the soul's journey—how the spirit, infinite and celestial, comes to dwell in the narrow cage of the body. Through divine utterance, the non-existent becomes real, and then vanishes again into God. All of creation—rose, stone, sun, cloud, earth—responds to the Divine voice.

‘Umar reveals how the soul can become a listener to that hidden speech, the subtle wahy, which cannot be heard by the physical ear or grasped by ordinary intellect. Only a purified heart, stripped of worldly distractions, can perceive this whisper from the Beloved. The passage gently teaches us how fear becomes invitation, and how revelation enters only when the soul is ready to listen.

Poem Verses

The Greeting of Light

In silent prayer,
he folded his hands.
Then 'Umar awoke—
his eyes catching the unseen.

The envoy of Rūm approached,
bowed low,
offering peace.

The Prophet once said:
"First the peace,
then the words."

So 'Umar replied,
"Peace upon you,"
and drew him close,
seated him
gently by his side.

To one who fears,
true welcome
is to still that fear.

Who needs calming
but the frightened heart?
Who needs reassurance
but the soul in trembling?

So 'Umar softened
that troubled mind,
breathed joy
into his desolate heart.

Then he began—
words fine as silk,
a weave of wisdom
on God’s nearness,
His beautiful Names,
His friendship,
His favor to the Abdāl—
those hidden saints
whose souls shine through
this shadowed world.

He spoke
of Divine states and stations,
the fleeting and the fixed—

The ḥāl—like the bride's unveiling,
visible to many;
And the maqām—
like the king alone
in the chamber
with his beloved.

Many taste the ecstasy,
but few
abide in union.

He spoke of the soul's journey,
of that Time beyond time,
of the Station of Holiness,
where the spirit—
like the Símurgh—
soared
through unseen skies,
feeding on pure grace,
each flight
beyond even
the wildest longing.

And when 'Umar saw
in the stranger's form
a hidden friend,
he knew—
this soul
longed for secrets.

He taught him
as master to seeker,
as rider to royal steed.

He saw
the soil was ready—
so he sowed
seeds of light.

A Question from the Heart

The envoy asked,
"O Commander,
how did the soul descend?
How did that boundless bird
enter the cage?"

'Umar replied:

"God whispered
a mystery—
a spell of Being
over non-being.
And from that breathless void,
existence danced
into delight.

He whispered again,
and what was
fell back

into the Unseen.

He spoke
to the rose—
and it bloomed.
To the stone—
and it blushed
as carnelian.

To the body—
He said, 'Be spirit.'
To the sun—
He said, 'Shine.'

And when He speaks
a fearful word—
even the sun
wears veils of shadow.

He whispered
into the ear of cloud,
and the rain fell
as tears from heaven's eye.

He whispered
to the earth,
and it stood still,
listening ever since.

If your heart
is in anguish,
know—

God has whispered
a riddle
into your soul.

He sets you between
two thoughts:
'Shall I follow,
or turn away?'

Even this confusion
is from Him.

And when He wills,
He tips the scale—
one path
gains weight,
and you choose.

But if you wish
your soul
to hear clearly,
remove the cotton
from your spirit's ear.

Then
you will hear
His riddles
and His signs.

And in that silence—
a voice descends:
a whisper not of sound,

but of Light.

This is waḥy—
revelation—
not of sense,
but of spirit.

And to receive it,
you must listen
with more
than mind
or reason.

You must listen
with the heart's ear."

The Fragrance Within the Shell

(Verses 1463–1508)

Summary

In this luminous discourse, Rumi draws the seeker beyond the surface of theological debate into the mystery of Divine compulsion (jabr) and free will (ikhtiyār). He begins by distinguishing the compulsion of worldly bondage—rooted in ego and blame—from the radiant surrender of the lovers of God, whose actions, though compelled, are transformed into pearls within the shell of Divine love.

Rumi employs rich Sufi metaphors, such as the musk-deer's scent within blood, the transformation of copper by the elixir, and the bread that becomes soul within the body. All point to the inner alchemy whereby God's chosen ones are changed not in form but in essence. He contrasts Adam's humility—owning

his fault while acknowledging God's decree—with Iblis' arrogance in blaming God for his sin. Adam's reverence earns Divine tenderness; Iblīs' denial earns rejection.

Through parable, Rumi gently guides the reader from the limitations of the intellect toward the soul's boundless longing. The shaking hand and the soul that splits mountains are not metaphors of helplessness, but of surrendering to a power deeper than reason, one that can shatter the moon or open the soul's skyward flight.

This is not an argument; it is a fragrance. And only the shell cracked open by love can release it.

Poem Verses

On Divine Compulsion and the Alchemy of Spirit

This "compulsion," they say,
but it is not the bondage of the self—
not the prison of those
chained by ego's will.

This is the moon,
breaking through the clouds—
not the cloud itself.
This is union, not coercion.

Those who know what jabr truly is
are the ones
whose hearts God has opened
with the eye of the unseen.

They see what lies ahead
and forget what lies behind.
Their compulsion is not of this world.
It is pearl,
not mere raindrop,
cradled in the shell.

The Scent of Secrets

Like musk hidden in the blood,
they seem plain—
but within, fragrance.

Don't say,
"This is just blood—how could it be perfume?"
Don't ask,
"How could copper

turn gold in the alchemist's
touch?"

Freewill and compulsion—
a phantom in your hands.
But in them,
it becomes Majesty,
a lamp lit by the unseen.

Bread,
wrapped in a cloth,
is dead and still.
But when the soul eats—
it dances.

The Soul's Fire and the Soul of Soul

Bread is bread,
until the soul drinks it
with Salsabīl's water.
If that is the soul's power—
what then,
of the Soul of souls?

A piece of flesh—man—
splits the mountain,
dives the sea,
claims the mine.

The mountain-breaking soul
is one thing.
But the soul of the soul—
split the moon.

If this heart
would lift the veil
on such secrets,
the soul would leap,
skyward.

Two Paths: Adam and Iblīs

Adam said,
"We wronged ourselves."
He blamed his own hand.

But Iblīs said,
"You misled me."
He hid behind God's will.

Both acts were God's—
but only one showed reverence.
One heart hid God's hand
to honor His name.
And God said,
"I concealed it, too—out of love."

Reverence meets reverence,
like sugar finds cake.

Parable of the Trembling Hand

One hand shakes from illness.
One shakes because you knocked
it.
Both movements come from
God—

but they are not the same.

You feel remorse
for the hand you struck.
Why not for the one trembling?

Beyond the Intellect

This quest of the mind—
clever, yes,
but dry.

The quest of the spirit—
wine,
wild and true.

The intellect walks a line
between cause and effect.
The spirit leaps
into awe.

When that Light descends,
it blinds both premise and
conclusion.
No need for proof,
no need for a cane
in the hands of the blind.

Wherever You Are, He Is

(Verses 1509–1538)

Summary

This luminous passage draws us back into the story of the soul—yet reminds us, we never truly left. Rumi, commenting on the verse "And He is with you wherever you are" (Qur'an 57:4), unveils the hidden unity of all experiences: ignorance and knowledge, sleep and wakefulness, sorrow and joy —all are veils reflecting the Divine presence. There is no moment, no state, that does not bear the imprint of God.

An ambassador questions Caliph 'Umar about why a pure spirit would be cast into the "dirt" of the body. 'Umar, embodying the insight of the Sufis, replies that even such questions are woven with purpose. God, whose knowledge births every benefit, surely knows the hidden wisdoms beyond our grasp. Every part,

even the human breath, holds good—so how can we doubt the value of the whole union of spirit and form?

As the passage deepens, Rumi shifts from reflection to transformation. A simple conversation becomes a doorway into ecstasy, where the ambassador loses himself, becoming like a stream swallowed by the sea. Through images of transformation—seed to harvest, bread to knowing, wax to light—Rumi describes the mystical process of fana (annihilation in God), the soul's journey into unity. The true life, he says, is with those who have died to the self and live in the radiance of Divine Presence.

Poem Verses

Returning to the Story

We return again to the story,
though—truthfully—
did we ever leave it?

This is the place of
"He is with you
wherever you may be."

All States Are His States

When you fall into ignorance,
you've walked into His prison.
When you awaken to knowledge,
you're sitting in His palace.

When you sleep,
you are drunk
with His wine.

And if you wake,
you rise by His hand.

When you cry,
you are a cloud
heavy with His mercy.

And if you laugh,
you are His lightning,
briefly flashing in the dark.

In wrath and war,
you mirror His Might.
In peace and forgiveness,
you reflect His Love.

Who are we, really,
in this tangled web of forms?
He is the only One—

like the single stroke of Alif.
Nothing else remains.
Nothing.

Why the Spirit Was Sent to Clay

A royal ambassador
came to ʻUmar, may God be
pleased with him,
and asked:

"O ʻUmar, what wisdom lies
in casting a pure soul
into this muddy world of dust and
clay?

How could the clear stream
be hidden in thick mud?
How could the soul,
so pure,
be tied into flesh and bone?"

ʻUmar answered gently:

"You are asking
what cannot be held
by words alone.

You've tried to imprison
a free and formless truth,
like binding the wind
inside a net of syllables.

But this asking—
itself—
has purpose.

Even if you are blind
to the purpose of God."

The All-Knowing Knows

He, from whom
all goodness flows—
how could He
not see what we see?

A thousand blessings arise,
and each thousand
is only a flicker
compared to His One.

Even your breath,
a single thread of your being,
brings benefit to the world—
then why deny
the benefit of the whole?

You are a part,
and even you bring good.
Why strike
at the Source?

If speech holds no benefit,
be silent.

But if it does,
then stop objecting,
and give thanks.

True Gratitude

Thankfulness is the collar
upon every soul.

Not the frown,
nor the sour face.

If vinegar believes
its bitterness is gratitude,
there's no one
more pious than sourness.

But if vinegar longs
to reach the heart,
let it sweeten
with sugar,
become healing oxymel.

The meaning of poetry
is uncertain in direction—
like a stone flung from a sling.
It doesn't obey the hand.

When the Cup Is Overflowing

Just a few drops of this wine
was enough.

The ambassador lost himself.

No title,
no message remained.

He became dizzy
in the Presence.

He was no longer a messenger—
but a king.

When Small Things Touch the Infinite

When a stream
enters the sea,
it becomes the sea.

When a seed
enters the field,
it becomes the harvest.

Bread,
once broken and eaten,
joins the living—
gains knowing.

When wax and wood
surrender to fire,
they become light.

Antimony,
once ground into powder,
becomes vision
when it touches the eye.

Blessed Are the Annihilated

Blessed is the one
who is freed
from himself,
and joins the One
who is truly alive.

But woe
to the living one
who keeps company
with the dead.

He too becomes
lifeless—
and life flees.

When you take shelter
in the Qur'an of God,
you are mingling
with the breath
of the Prophets.

The Qur'an
is the mirror
of their states.

They are the great fish
swimming in the ocean
of Divine Majesty.

A Winged Cry from the Cage

(Verses 1539–1592)

Summary

This passage is the beginning of a powerful parable within Rumi's Masnavi. It opens with a reminder: reading the Qur'an without letting it penetrate the soul is like seeing prophets and saints without hearing their message. True understanding shakes the soul, makes the heart cry out like a caged bird longing for its freedom.

The parrot—Rumi's tender symbol for the human soul—sits imprisoned by fate yet filled with yearning. She begs her merchant-master to carry her message of longing to the free parrots of her homeland. Her words are soaked with spiritual passion and divine complaint—wrestling with abandonment, longing, and the strange sweetness of love that burns and heals.

Through her message, Rumi unfolds layers of mystical love: where cruelty from the Beloved becomes sweeter than comfort, where sorrow is treasured more than peace. The parrot's longing reflects the soul's divine homesickness, its secret knowledge that there is more beyond the cage of the self.

Then the poem turns inward again: this parrot is the soul. And for such a soul, even its failings draw God nearby. Every cry of "My Lord" opens a flood of divine replies. This soul ascends not to places we can map, but to a vastness beyond form—a realm of God's nearness, hidden from the world's grasp. The journey has just begun.

Poem Verses

The Heart that Listens

If you read the Qur'an
but your heart stays shut,
what use is seeing prophets
and saints walk by?

But if the words
sink deep into your being,
each story becomes
a shiver in your soul—
A bird trapped in a cage,
aching to be free.

To sit quietly,
and not feel this pain—
this is not peace.
It is ignorance.

The spirits who broke free
were prophets—
they are not dreamers,
they are guides.

Their voices call
from beyond the veil:
"This is the way out.
We walked it.
You must too."

"This narrow cage—
this name, this fame—
you must grow sick of it,
weary of it,
before you are granted release."

Chains of Reputation

Reputation,
the world's bright chain,

binds tighter than iron.
On this path,
it is the heaviest shackle.

The Parrot's Message

A merchant once kept
a beautiful parrot
in a golden cage.

He planned a journey to India.
Kind-hearted,
he asked each servant,
"What gift shall I bring you?"

Each one made their wish.
Then he turned
to the parrot.

She said,
"When you reach the green groves
of my homeland,
find the wild parrots there.

Tell them:
'One of your sisters,
a soul burning with longing,
is locked away—
held in a prison not of her
choosing.

She sends you her peace,
she asks for justice.
She yearns for guidance,
to know the path
back to truth.

Is it fair
that I should die here—
with no leaves to rest on,
no sky to fly through,
while you live in open air
and soft shade?

What kind of love
lets a friend stay forgotten—
one in chains,
while the others sip morning dew
in the meadows?

If you remember me,
just once,
even a sip of wine in my name
will sweeten my exile.

And if that is too much,
spill just one drop—
a libation to this dust-sifting
heartbroken friend.

Where is your promise,
your sacred oath?
Have you forgotten
the sweetness of our bond?

If I wronged you—
and now you wrong me—
what then is the difference
between friend and foe?'"

The Pain of Love

She continued:
"Even your anger,
even your turning away—
I would not trade it
for music or song.

Your cruelty,
to me, is sweeter than joy.
Your wrath,
dearer than life.

If this is the fire you send,
what then is the light
that lies beyond it?

If this is your mourning robe,
what must your festival look like?

No one can ever reach
the bottom of your beauty.

I weep aloud—
yet I fear you'll hear me
and become kind—
and I'll lose
this sacred sorrow.

I love your harshness
as much as your tenderness.

Isn't it strange—
to love both the thorn
and the rose?

If I escape this cage
and reach the garden,
I will still sing
of thorns.

I am a nightingale
who feeds
on both rose and bramble.

But what kind of nightingale is
this?
This one breathes fire—
and calls it sweetness.

He is in love
with the Whole.
And he is the Whole.
He chases his own love
in himself."

Soul of the Parrot

This parrot
is your soul.
Listen:

do you hear
what birds whisper
to each other?

Who among them
has Solomon's wisdom
in a weak, fluttering chest?

If this bird cries out—
not in praise or complaint,
but with sheer longing—
even the heavens
tremble.

With every "My Lord,"
a hundred voices
from beyond reply:
"We are here."

To God,
his failings
shine brighter than obedience.

Even his disbelief
tears the veils
from false faith.

Every moment
his spirit ascends—
God places upon his crown
a new crown
from the Unseen.

No Place, Every Place

He walks this earth
in a body of dust,
but his spirit dwells
in the realm of "no-place"—

Not a "place"
your thoughts can touch.

He moves
where imagination ends,
where even the four rivers
of Paradise
run beneath his steps.

Stop here.
Let silence speak.
God knows
what words cannot.

The Fire Beneath the Tongue

(Verses 1593–1614)

Summary

In this luminous and cautionary meditation, Rumi warns of the burning power of speech and the dangers of spiritual pride. The tongue, he says, holds fire—one word can incinerate a world. In a world like dry cotton, carelessly striking sparks of ego and empty rhetoric can set hearts and lives aflame. He then reminds us that the soul contains the breath of the Prophet Jesus, capable of healing if unshrouded by the body, but dangerous when confined to fleshly desires.

Self-mastery becomes the gate to sacred speech. Cravings and worldly sweetness blind us, while the path of ascetic restraint leads upward. Rumi quotes

Fariduddin Attar to underscore the Sufi path: embrace pain, even poison, if it leads to truth, for the saint is beyond the reach of harm. But the seeker, still fevered, must beware of arrogantly engaging saints or diving into spiritual oceans beyond his training.

He draws a sharp line between the saint—whose every act is infused with divine presence—and the imperfect soul, who turns wisdom to ignorance and gold to ash. Only when the self is annihilated and the ego surrendered can true alchemy occur. The final lines caution against competing with those guided by God: stop where you are, seek humility, and wait until you are ready to be consumed by the fire of God like Abraham, not destroyed by it like Nimrod.

Poem Verses

The Fire in the Tongue

This tongue—
a stone, yet flint-like too,
for what leaps from it
is fire.

Don't strike
word against word,
like metal against stone,
for show, for stories,
for the vanity of speech.

Cotton Fields and Sparks

The world is dry cotton,
the night is deep—
who would fling sparks among
such fields?
And yet, some do.

Eyes closed,
tongues blazing,
they burn the world
with empty boasts.

One word,
a single word,
can shatter worlds—
turn foxes into lions.

The Breath of the Spirit

Each soul, in essence,
holds the breath of Jesus—
a healing wind.
But housed in the body,
that breath wounds
as much as it soothes.

Remove the veil of flesh,

and every soul
would speak like the Messiah—
a word that heals
simply by being spoken.

Sweet Speech and Bitter Desire

If your speech
is to taste like honey,
leave off your cravings—
don't eat the sugar
of the flesh's hunger.

The wise
long for restraint.
Children only want sweets.
The one who learns
to master himself
ascends to Heaven;
the one who eats
what glitters
is left behind.

Attar's Saying Unveiled

Attar said—
O you ruled by your senses,
drink the blood of discipline,
crawl through the dust of the body.
The spirit drinks poison
and finds it sweet.

For the saint—
even deadly poison
becomes a remedy.
He's already healed,
freed from the need to abstain.
But the seeker?
Still burning with fever.

Only the Seeker is Warned

The Prophet spoke:
O daring seeker,
beware.
Do not challenge
those who are already sought.

A Nimrod lives in you—
do not rush into the fire.
If you must,
then first,
become Abraham.

Don't leap into the sea
unless you've learned to swim.
The saint dives
and brings up pearls.
You dive
and drown.

Gold and Ashes

The perfected one
turns dirt into gold.
The unripe soul
takes gold—
and it crumbles

to ash.

His touch
is the touch of God.
The other's
is the hand
of devils and deceit.

His ignorance
becomes knowledge.
Another's knowledge
turns to darkness.

Alchemy of the Soul

What the sick man touches
brings sickness.
What the perfect soul touches—
even disbelief—
becomes faith.

You,
on foot,
wrestling with a horseman—
your head will not be spared.

Stop.
Still your step.

The Silence Before Surrender

(Verses 1615–1639)

Summary

This passage opens with the awe-struck humility of Pharaoh's magicians before Prophet Moses. Though they came to contest him, their hearts softened the moment they witnessed his serenity and spiritual authority. Their simple act of deferring— "Shall we begin, or you?"—opened the door to faith. This respect dissolved the illusion of opposition. When they truly recognized the truth, they surrendered—not just their pride, but even their hands and feet, in a symbolic gesture of penitence and spiritual sacrifice.

Rumi then shifts the teaching inward. He invites us into the sacred silence of spiritual infancy, likening the seeker to a newborn—one who must first listen before it can speak. Just as the Prophet (PBUH) is the tongue, we are the ear.

Until the ego has quieted, and listening deepened, true speech—true understanding—cannot emerge.

The poem ends in a luminous call to repentance and longing. Adam, cast from Paradise, is remembered not as cursed but as one who learned to weep. His tears are portrayed as sacred, a means of return. The seeker, too, must prepare their inner landscape—not with worldly cravings, but with the fire of longing and the purity of tears. Only then will the soul's garden bloom, and its true wealth be revealed.

Poem Verses

A Glimpse of Reverence

In Pharaoh's court,
those magicians,
armed with spells and pride,
stood to challenge Moses—
yet they bowed.

They said,
"You choose, O Moses—
will you cast first,
or shall we?"

He answered,
"No—begin,
you who practice illusion.
Let the people see your work."

In this simple deference,
their hearts were turned.
The respect they showed—
a silent seed
that broke the spine of their
resistance.

They had come
to boast and conquer.
But in his stillness,
their fire cooled.

They saw what they had not seen.
And when truth dawned,
they fell—
not from force,
but from awe.

The Path of Silence

They offered up
their hands and feet—
not to Pharaoh's blade,
but to Divine regret.

What they had once lifted in pride
they now surrendered
in repentance.

For only the Perfect One
may speak freely—
every word and bite is lawful to
him.

But you—
you are still an ear.
Do not eat.
Do not speak.

He is the tongue.
You,
a listener still in the womb.

Like a newborn,
you must wait—
in silence.
In listening.
Only then
will speech descend.

If the babe babbles
before it hears,
it becomes the most lost
of all creation.

Whoever is deaf
from the beginning
cannot speak.

To speak truly,
you must first hear—
like the Qur'ān says:
Enter homes through their doors.

Words must be born
from the door of listening.
Only One speaks
without need—
the Creator,
originless,
sustainer of all.

We,
mere echoes
of His command.

The Gift of Tears

If you hear these words
and feel no strangeness—
put on the robe of a dervish.
Find a quiet place,
and let your tears speak.

For Adam,
cast from the Garden,
was taught
to weep.

It was weeping
that softened the curse.
Moist eyes
became his prayer.

He came to earth
to weep
and remember.

If you are from his blood—
then cry with him.
Join the caravan
of the broken-hearted.

Make a dessert
from heart's fire,
and eye's water—
this is how the garden blooms.

You crave bread—
like the blind.
But what do you know
of the taste of tears?

Empty this sack
of your worldly hunger.
Then see—
it will be filled
with gemstones.

What Nourishes the Heart

(Verses 1640–1657)

Summary

In this passage, Rumi weaves two teachings together. First, he speaks as a spiritual master, urging us to "wean" our soul from unclean sustenance—both physical and spiritual. Food here becomes a symbol for what we take into our being: thoughts, earnings, actions. If what we consume—literally or metaphorically—is unlawful or impure, it darkens the soul and breeds forgetfulness, deceit, and arrogance. But when our nourishment is lawful, sincere, and rightly earned, it becomes light: it gives rise to knowledge, devotion, and the longing for God.

Then, the narrative shifts to the story of the merchant and his parrot. The parrot had earlier sent a message to the merchant with the birds of India. Upon

delivering this message, one parrot—hearing the pain of separation—dies instantly. This moment reveals the power of shared longing and spiritual recognition. The merchant is stunned and filled with regret, unable to understand the full consequence of his simple act. It teaches that speech is never neutral: words, like food, have spiritual consequences. What we share, and how we share it, can transform—or wound—another soul.

This passage tenderly carries the seeker from the inward discipline of pure living to the outer mystery of spiritual communication, reminding us that both food and words, when handled with heedlessness, can darken or destroy. Still, when infused with purity, they become sacred channels of transformation.

Poem Verses

Nourishing the Soul

Wean your soul,
like a babe from the Devil's milk—
turn it toward the Angels,
let it feed on light.

So long as your spirit is dark and heavy,
know it nurses from the same breast
as the cursed one.

But every morsel born of what is right—
earned by truth, shared with humility—
that morsel carries light.
It nourishes the soul,
brings wisdom to birth,
and awakens love.

The oil that puts out a lamp,
call it water,
for it has no fire in it.
The true oil feeds the flame within.

From lawful bread,
knowledge rises,
wisdom grows,
compassion flows.
But if a bite gives rise to envy,
if deceit,
ignorance,
and forgetfulness
emerge from what you eat—
know it's poison,
know it's stolen.

The Seed of Every Thought

Do you plant wheat
and expect barley to rise?
Have you seen a mare
give birth to a donkey?

Every bite is a seed,
and every thought is the fruit.
The soul is the sea,
the thoughts are its pearls.

From lawful food
comes the longing to serve,
the will to walk toward the next
world.

A Merchant Returns Home

The merchant, his business done,
returned home,
his heart at ease.
He brought gifts for his slaves,
tokens for each servant.

The Bird Asks for News

The parrot asked,
"And what of me?
Where is my gift?
What news do you bring?"

But he answered,
"Ah, I regret what I said,
I gnaw my hand in remorse.
Why did I speak so foolishly?
What was I thinking,
to carry your message so lightly?"

The parrot pressed gently,
"O Master,
what has made you sorrowful?
Why this regret, this grief?"

A Message With Consequence

He replied,
"I shared your lament
with parrots of your kind,
bright-feathered ones from your
homeland.

One among them heard your
sorrow,
and when she understood,
her heart broke.
She shuddered—
and died.

In that moment,
I was struck with guilt.
Why had I spoken?
But what use is regret
after the words are already
spoken?"

Words That Cannot Be Recalled

(Verses 1658–1690)

Summary

This passage unfolds a profound meditation on the irreversible power of words and actions, as well as the spiritual authority of God's beloved saints. Rumi begins by warning that once a word is spoken—like an arrow let loose—it cannot be retrieved. Though the speaker may not intend harm, the effects ripple beyond his control, for the unfolding of consequences belongs to God. Even if the doer repents or dies in regret, the pain inflicted may continue to bear fruit long after.

But there are those—God's saints, the abdāl—whose nearness to the Divine grants them the ability to intervene in the unseen. Their repentance, empowered by God's grace, can block the chain of causality. Through them, what was said

can be unsaid, forgotten even by the minds that once received it. They possess the power to awaken or obscure remembrance, as alluded to in verses of the Qur'an.

These hidden ones rule not the body, but the realm of hearts. At night, they cleanse the souls of others, emptying them of unnecessary thoughts, and by morning, refill them with the precise pearls of remembrance meant for their journey. Like artisans reclaiming their tools, or skills returning to their true owners, everything finds its way back. The deeper message is one of Divine trust: that nothing is ever truly lost, but always returning to its rightful place by the hand of the One who governs the unseen.

Poem Verses

The Unseen Weight of Words

Know this, child—
a word, once spoken,
is like an arrow
let loose from the bow.

It does not turn back.
It cannot be retrieved.
Stop the flood
at its very source,
before it tears
through valleys and villages.

Once it escapes,
the torrent runs wild—
its ruin is no surprise.
The effects unfold beyond your
will.
You may start the motion,
but what comes next
belongs to God.

Zayd looses an arrow toward
'Amr—
swift and silent,
it sinks its teeth like a leopard.

The wound it brings
lasts a year,
maybe more.
But the pain,
the pain belongs to God.

Even if Zayd,
struck by fear,
dies the moment 'Amr is hit—
still the wound deepens,
the pain multiplies,

and ‘Amr fades to death.

So we call Zayd the murderer.
Though God created the pain,
it came
from Zayd’s hand.

Whether it’s a breath,
a seed sown,
a net laid,
or the body’s desire—
the fruits all come
by God's command.

The Saints Who Turn Arrows

But the friends of God,
the abdāl,
bear a different power—
from Him.

When they repent,
they can halt
the path of an arrow already
loosed.
By the hand of the Lord,
they shut the gate
between cause
and consequence.

They erase what was spoken.
Even spit doesn’t burn,
nor the roast at the fire.

They make the words vanish—
not just from lips,
but from memory,
from hearts,
from every ear
that ever heard them.

They Rule the Heart’s Horizon

If you seek proof,
recite:
"Whatever verse We cancel or cause
to be forgotten..."

Or:
"They made you forget My
warning..."

The saints are masters of
remembrance—
and of forgetfulness.

They hold the keys
to every heart.

When they seal off your knowing,
you are lost—
even if virtue lives in you.

Do not laugh at them.
Do not take them lightly.

Read again:
"They made you forget."
Those who rule hearts
rule more than kings.

A king rules your limbs,
but the one who owns hearts—
he owns the soul.

Practice is a branch
of true vision.
And Man—
he is the pupil in the eye.

In the Night, They Empty You

I dare not tell it all.
The center forbids.

But know this:
in the still of every night,
these saints
empty your heart
of a thousand thoughts—
good and evil alike.

Then, by dawn,
they fill you again,
like oysters filled with pearls.

What comes back—
your skills,
your art,
your kindness,
your cruelty—
returns to the spirit it knew.

Everything Finds Its Way Back

The goldsmith's craft
does not return
to the blacksmith.
The kind man's nature
does not go
to the cruel.

When the Day arrives—
everything returns
to its rightful soul,
like property
to its true owner.

Even after a night's sleep,
your gifts come racing back
to claim their house.

At dawn,
they circle round again—
these carrier pigeons of thought—
bringing wisdom
from other cities
back to you.

The Bird That Heard and Died

(Verses 1691–1762)

Summary

In this deeply mystical and emotionally stirring section of the Masnavi, Rumi tells the story of a merchant and his beloved parrot. This tale blossoms into a profound meditation on love, loss, longing, and Divine jealousy. Upon hearing how other parrots escaped their cages by feigning death, the merchant's parrot imitates them and falls motionless. The merchant grieves, believing her dead. His lament spirals into a burning self-reckoning—his tongue becomes a symbol of both power and destruction, a divine double-edged sword.

The parrot becomes more than a bird—it is the soul, the voice of Divine inspiration, the beloved light within. Her silence is not death, but return: from the end of form to the beginning of essence. Rumi opens up into a wider spiritual

vision, reflecting on the limits of language, the jealousy of God (ghayrah), the annihilation of the self (fana), and the hidden sweetness of loss. The soul's longing, he tells us, is not to be avoided; it is the fire by which we are remade.

This is a love story not of the world, but of the soul's return to its Origin. The cage opens when we let go of everything, including ourselves.

Poem Verses

The Silence Before Flight

She heard their tale—
the parrots' strange reply.
She trembled,
then stilled.

She fell
like a feather through silence,
grew cold in her cage,
and died.

The merchant,
seeing her lifeless,
threw off his cap,
rushed toward her,
and tore open his robe.

A Cry of Grief

O bright one,
sweet-throated joy of my soul—
what has happened to you?
Why this stillness,
this emptiness?

O song of my garden,
wine of my breath,
basil of my heart!

If Solomon had owned a bird like you,
he would've forgotten
all other birds.

O, I took you cheaply,
and so turned away
too soon.

Tongue of Fire

O my tongue—
you've ruined me.
And yet,
you still speak.

How long will you keep
casting fire

into the stack of my soul?

My spirit groans in secret,
while you shout aloud.
You command—
and I obey.

You are a treasure,
endless.
You are a wound,
incurable.

You are flute and bait,
a friend in exile,
and the hunter's trap.

How long,
merciless tongue,
will you raise your bow
against me?

The Bird Has Flown

Look—
you've frightened my bird away.
No more grazing
in the field of injustice!

Either answer me,
or show me a way
to restore joy.

O dawn that dissolved my
darkness,
O light that awakened my day,
O bird of my destiny—
you have flown
from the end of me
to the beginning.

The Wound of God's Jealousy

The ignorant
love suffering—
they cling to pain forever.
Read it yourself,
in the Qur'an:
"I swear... in distress."

With your face,
my heart was free.
In your river,
no foam remained.

My cries of "alas!"
are shadows of union,
ghosts of your nearness
pulling me from the present.

It was God's jealousy,
and against that
there is no shield.

Where is the heart
unbroken by His love?

His jealousy
is not like ours—
it means
He is other than everything.

He cannot be grasped
by thought,
or wrapped
in words.

Would that my tears
were an ocean,
to scatter like offerings
at her feet.

The Inner Parrot

My parrot,
my wise one,
translator of my thoughts—
she warned me
from the beginning:
accept whatever comes.
Right or wrong.

That parrot lives
hidden within you.

What you see outside
is her reflection—
on this form,
on that.

She wounds you—
and you call it justice.
She lifts you—
and you call it joy.

O you who burned
your soul
for the sake of flesh—
now you've lost the soul
and lit the body.

A Fire to Share

I'm burning.
Who wants tinder?
Come—
light your sorrow
on my flame.

If you must burn,
burn quickly.

Unspeakable Longing

O alas,
alas...
the moon has vanished
beneath these clouds.

I cannot speak—
my heart
is a forest fire.
Separation has become

a roaring lion.

What will happen
when that lion
drinks the wine of longing?

Beyond Rhymes, Beyond Sound

My Beloved whispers:
"Don't think of rhymes.
Don't think at all.
Just be.

You are already
in tune
with bliss.

Why bother with words?
They're thorns
on the vine of union.

I will shatter
words and sounds and letters—
so we may speak
without them.

I will say to you
what I hid
from Adam,
what Abraham never heard,
what Gabriel cannot grasp.

Even Jesus
breathed no word of it.

Drowned in God

I am not
'I am.'
I am nothing.

In this nothing,
I found true being.
So I wove myself
into unselfing.

All kings
are ruled
by those
who submit.

All lovers
are hunted
by their prey.

The trapper
lays himself low,
that birds
might descend.

Those who steal hearts
have their hearts
stolen in turn.

A Truth of Reversal

Whoever you think

is in love—
know also
they are beloved.

Water searches
for the thirsty,
as the thirsty
search for water.

So be still.

He is already
pulling you close.

Hold back
your overflowing speech—
or it may undo you.

Still—
even in ruin
there is treasure.

Willing to Drown

The one
drowned in God
asks only
to drown more.

His soul
tossed on the sea—
he asks:

"Is the deep more sweet
than the surface?

Is His wound
more beautiful
than His shield?"

O heart,
you split yourself apart
trying to tell joy
from pain.

Even sugar,
if it's a desire,
can separate you
from Him.

But His joy
is found
in your surrender
to emptiness.

Each of His stars
is worth
a hundred moons.

He has the right
to break
the whole world.

The Price of Love

We bought the price.

We paid the cost.
We wagered
our souls
gladly.

Lovers live
by dying.

You will never reach
His heart
until you give up
your own.

I tried to charm Him
with a hundred graces.
He turned away:
"Don't cast spells on Me."

He knows
your deepest thoughts.
You've seen double—
how can you see
the One?

The Pearl and the Loaf

You valued Me
too cheaply,
O dull-hearted one.

And so you sold Me
just as cheaply.

Like a child,
you gave a pearl
for a piece of bread.

Unspeakable Tides

I am drowned
in a Love
so vast
it drowns
every love
before and after.

I've only spoken a thread of it.
If I spoke more,
your senses would burn,
my tongue would be ash.

When I say "lip,"
it's the shore
of that Ocean.

When I say "not,"
I mean—
"None but Him."

Hidden Sweetness

I sit
with a bitter face
from sweetness.

I stay silent
from fullness.

In this sour mask
I hide
the sugar
of both worlds.

I speak
one
of a hundred
hidden truths—
just enough
to keep
your longing awake.

After the Face, Do Not Turn Back

(Verses 1763–1814)

Summary

This passage is a deeply mystical meditation on spiritual progression, Divine jealousy, and the soul's yearning for union with God. Rumi speaks of the tragedy of turning back from spiritual intimacy—after touching the King's hand, how can one stoop to kiss His foot? Once one has known the Beloved's face, seeking His scent alone is a betrayal. God's jealousy is not like ours; it is holy, rooted in His love for our return to Him alone.

The speaker shifts into a song of longing, weeping not out of despair, but because sorrow is beloved to the One he loves. The grief, the tears, even the wails become acts of praise. Pain is not a punishment here, but a proof of love, a pearl polished in the soul's fire.

This poem also explores the illusion of duality, as "I" and "you" dissolve into Divine Unity. The world's joy and sorrow are temporary garments. True love transcends them, forever green. Rumi's voice merges with the longing of the Nightingale, crying not for worldly pleasures, but for reunion with the lost Rose.

In the final movement, he reminds us that we are not what we seem—we are not the body, nor even the wine. We are the ferment that intoxicates creation. In that moment of mystery, he steps away from the metaphysical and prepares the listener for the next story, as if to say: all this yearning, all this pain, leads somewhere. Let me tell you how.

Poem Verses

After the Ascent

Do not descend
after the heights.
If the niche of your soul
has opened to revelation,
do not turn back
to old forms and customs.

If you've worn the robe
of the King's nearness,
why sell trinkets
in His name?

If you've sat in the inner chamber,
friend of the Sultan,
why beg now at His gate?

You were granted
the kiss of His hand—
why stoop
to kiss the foot?

Yes, the foot is holy too,
but once you've tasted
the embrace of His face,
lesser gestures
are a step away,
not toward.

Jealousy of the Divine

God is jealous
of such regress.
Once you've known
the perfume of the Beloved,
why trade it
for a shadow of scent?

His jealousy
is not like ours.
The jealousy of men
is straw.
His—
is wheat,
pure and nourishing.

Know this:
every jealousy
has its root in Him.
All others
are branches
without likeness.

The Sweetness of Lament

But leave that now—
I must speak
of that cruel Beauty
who vanishes,
then reappears,
only to vanish again.

I wail,
because He loves
the sound of wailing.
From both worlds
He asks for grief,
not gold.

Why should I not cry
from His hiddenness?
I'm not among
those drunk on His wine.
How can night rejoice
without the light of His dawn?

Even His bitterness
is sweet to me.
May my soul
be offered to the One
who breaks
my heart open.

I love
my longing.
I cherish
my pain.
To grieve for Him
is to praise Him.

I make the dust of sorrow
a salve for my eyes—
so the oceans of my tears
turn to pearls.

Hidden Within the Complaint

These tears,
shed for Him,
are not tears—
they are jewels.
The world sees water.
God sees gems.

Yes, I complain
of the Soul of all souls,
but no—
I only describe.
My heart says,
"He torments me,"
but I laugh
at its game of pretending.

O Radiance of the Righteous,
grant this dust justice—
for You are the dais,
and I, the threshold of Your door.

In the presence of our Beloved,
where are "we" and "I"?

Where "I" Dissolves

O You
who have no "I,"
no "we,"
essence beyond
all veils of form—
when man and woman
become one,
You are
that One.

You created
this illusion of "I"
and "you"
so You might
worship Yourself
in the mirror of multiplicity.

In the end,
every self dissolves
into the Selfless.
All souls
become one soul,
drowned
in You.

So come—
O Lord of "Be,"
beyond all saying,
beyond even the word "come."

Love Beyond Joy and Sorrow

The body
can only picture You
in its own image—
a smiling face,
a furrowed brow.

But don't believe
that a heart
trapped in moods
is fit to witness
Your truth.

Joy and sorrow—
these are borrowed veils.

True Love lives
where neither spring
nor autumn
reach.
It is ever green,
ever new.

The Pearl of Pain

Tell, O Radiant One,
the tale
of the soul
shattered
into longing.

For one glance
from the eye
of the Beloved
has seared
my heart.

If He slays me,
I forgive Him.
Even as I whisper,
"All is lawful,"
He flees.

Why flee
from dust-born tears
if You Yourself
have placed
the salt of sorrow
on these hearts?

The Nightingale's Cry

Each dawn
You pour light
like wine.
Yet my lips
receive only absence.

Why do You give
so freely to others,
and to me,
only delay?

Speak,
not of the Rose,
but of the Nightingale
severed
from Her scent.

My ache
is not caused
by worldly joy or grief—
I live
in another realm,
unseen.

Not All That Lives, Lives

So don't judge
by what appears.
Don't dwell
in praise or blame.
Wrongdoing,
virtue—

they come and go.
Only God remains.

O my dawn, Husām al-Dīn,
ask forgiveness for me from our
Lord.

For you are the one who asks
pardon,
you are the breath of the Universal
Soul,
the spirit of every prayer.

We Are the Wine

Now the light of morning breaks,
and from Your Light we drink
the morning cup—the wine
of Your Mansur.

Other wine
borrows its fire
from ours.
Even the heavens
revolve
in search of our clarity.

Wine is drunk
on us,
not we on it.
The body
comes from us—
we do not
belong to the body.

We are the bees.
Bodies
are the wax.

This is too long.
Tell the tale
of the merchant—
so we may hear
what came
of that
faithful soul.

Die Before the Cage Opens

(Verses 1815–1848)

Summary

This tale, told through Rumi's parable of the merchant and the parrot, is a mystical allegory on spiritual death and liberation. The merchant, representing the soul caught in worldly longing, is consumed by grief after his prized parrot asks him to bear a message to its kin in India. His desperate yearning mirrors the seeker's confusion—sometimes proud, sometimes humble, burning for union yet uncertain of the path.

In India, the merchant sought advice from another parrot, hoping to free his own. This second parrot feigned death—a gesture of silent wisdom. Upon returning, the merchant tells his parrot what he witnessed. In a flash of understanding, the parrot mimics the act, feigning death itself. Believing it dead,

the merchant removes it from the cage, only for the parrot to spring to life and fly to freedom. This act reveals a profound Sufi truth: only through spiritual death—by-dying to ego, to voice, to praise—can the soul gain true liberation.

The poem emphasizes the dangers of visibility, pride, and self-display in the spiritual journey. Like the parrot, the seeker must learn to hide the self, become nothing, and trust in the grace of God. When ego dies, even fire becomes cool, even seas become paths. This is the Way: to die before death—so the cage may open, and the soul may fly.

Poem Verses

The Heart in Turmoil

In anguish and longing,
the merchant turned in fire—
his soul burning,
torn between pleading and pride,
between clarity and illusion.

He reached for anything,
like a drowning man
grasping at reeds,
hands flailing, feet striking,
hoping some hand
would find his own
in that perilous dark.

But the Friend,
the One who truly sees,
loves this trembling,
this storm inside—
Better to thrash and weep
than lie silent in stillness.

The King is Never Idle

The Sovereign of the soul—
He is never absent.
He doesn't groan,
for He does not suffer,
but His mercy moves
in hidden ways.

"Every day He is about a new
affair,"
He says,
so do not stand idle.
Scrape the path,
tear through the dust,
do not rest
until your final breath is lit
by His favor,
your last inhale

a kiss from the Divine.

For every motion of your soul,
whether man or woman,
the King of Hearts
leans from the window,
watching.

The Dead Bird Rises

And then,
he opened the cage.

The parrot—
still and silent—
suddenly rose,
like the sun at dawn
bursting from the East.

She flew to a high branch,
alive,
beyond death.

The merchant stared,
astonished—
what mystery was this?

He raised his voice,
"O bird of song,
tell me your secret.
What did that other parrot
whisper in India
that taught you to die
so you could fly?"

The Wisdom of Dying

She replied,
"She showed me how
to leave behind my charms,
to fall silent,
to love not the voice
that bound me.

By dying,
she taught me
to live.

To the singer adored
by all ears,
she said:
'Be like me.
Die to your praise,
and you will be free.'

For the grain
that shows itself
will be devoured;
the bud
that reveals itself
is plucked too soon.

Disguise yourself.
Bury the bait.
Become the snare.
Hide your sweetness—

become the silent grass
on the rooftop."

The Dangers of Display

"If you offer your beauty
to the marketplace,
know this:
a hundred sorrows
will be sold with it.

Envy rains down,
plots swirl like wind.
Even friends
will gnaw at your time.

He who has never
planted the seed,
how could he know
the worth of the harvest?

You must run—
run beneath
the shelter of God's grace.
It was His grace
that created your soul,
a thousandfold."

The Elements as Friends

Then you will find
a fortress around you—
a divine shelter
wrapped in light.

Even fire and water
will rise to protect you.

Did not the sea
become a path
for Moses and Noah?
Did it not drown
their enemies in its rage?

Was not the fire
a sanctuary for Abraham,
cool as a rose garden
while Nimrod burned with rage?

Did not the mountain
call to John the Baptist,
saying,
"Come—hide in me
from the sword
that seeks your neck"?

The Parrot's Farewell

Then the parrot
turned to her old master.
She gave him
a few drops of counsel,
rich with soul,
and said goodbye.

"May God protect you,"
he said,

his heart softened.
"You've shown me
a new way."

And he whispered
to himself,
"This is the path for me.
I will take it.

Her way
is radiant.

How could my soul
be less than a bird?

Let me die
as she died—
that I too
might rise."

The Fire Inside Sweet Words

(Verses 1849–1877)

Summary

In this powerful teaching, Rumi reveals the spiritual peril lurking within praise and popularity. The body is described as a cage, and the flattery of people, though pleasing, becomes a thorn that wounds the soul. As voices sing the ego's greatness, the heart begins to believe them. Yet beneath every sweet word lies a hidden fire: arrogance, self-deception, and eventual disgrace.

Rumi warns that even if we are wise to the flatterer's motives, the effects of praise linger like poison in the bloodstream. It intoxicates. And worse, it remains unseen until it has changed us. Using Pharaoh as the ultimate cautionary example, Rumi shows how endless admiration led to spiritual ruin.

He calls us to be the ball, not the bat—to welcome humility, to endure difficulty, and to resist the false elevation of the ego. The passage ends in stark imagery: the same people who once adored you will, one day, recoil from you like you've risen from the grave. Even the Devil, once your tempter, will turn away in disgust—because you have become something worse than him.

This is a spiritual stripping down—an invitation to radical humility. Rumi reminds us: do not trust praise—trust in the mercy of being low, and unseen.

Poem Verses

The Soul's True Wound

The body—
a cage of hollow flattery,
where praise becomes thorn
piercing spirit.

One says,
"I am your truest friend."
Another,
"No, I am your soul's reflection."

One sings,
"No one is as noble, as generous,
as radiant as you."
Another bows,
"Both worlds belong to you.
We are nothing but mirrors
of your soul."

Drunk on their admiration,
he forgets himself—
forgets how many
like him
the Devil has cast into the current
of destruction.

The Poison Beneath the Honey

Praise is a sweet morsel—
but it carries fire inside.
Its heat is hidden,
its taste, delightful.
Only later
does the smoke rise.

Do not say,
"How could I swallow this?
I know their words are hollow."
Still—
if the one who praised you
were to scorn you in public,
your heart
would smolder for days.

Even if you know

he cursed you from
disappointment,
even if you see
his bitterness was born of gain
denied,
still—
the burn lingers.

And so does praise.

Praise Lasts Longer Than You Think

Its glow—
not lasting like a flame,
but like sugar
that sweetens silently,
then brings forth boils
long after the taste is gone.

Praise nourishes pride.
It feeds the illusion
that the self is something solid.
But sweet is not always safe.
If you could see
what Pharaoh became—
made monstrous
by endless flattery—
you would kneel in dust
and thank God
for your humiliation.

Be the Ball, Not the Bat

Let yourself be struck.
Be like the ball—
flying only because it surrenders
to the blow.

Don't become
the bat—
harsh, controlling,
swinging in arrogance.

When beauty and youth pass,
so will their lies.
Those who once
worshipped you
will turn in disgust.

From Idol to Outcast

They once called you "lord,"
just to use you.
But when you've grown infamous,
even the Devil will flee.

Once he chased you,
offering his wine—
but now that you've become
more devil than man,
he leaves you
in your shame.

They once clung
to your robe.
Now they cross the street
at the sight of you.

The Sea Calls Its Drop

(Verses 1878–1904)

Summary

This passage is a prayerful meditation on human helplessness and the overwhelming grace of God. Rumi begins with humility: we may speak many words, but without the light of Divine mercy, even angels would be lost in darkness. He pleads for a small drop of knowledge—a hint of wisdom placed within the soul—to be drawn back into the vast ocean of Divine knowing before it is consumed by the lower nature or scattered by worldly winds.

He then reflects on the mystery of Divine power: nothing is ever truly lost to God. Even that which falls into non-existence can return the moment He calls it. This is the eternal cycle of creation—everything dies and returns, night falls and dawn rises, thought dissolves and spirit awakens again. Just as autumn strips the

garden bare, spring revives what was taken, and even death is compelled to return what it swallowed.

The passage closes by turning inward. Within the human soul lies a hidden garden—lush, blooming, divine. The words spoken by prophets and saints carry the scent of that unseen realm. Like Jacob, who regained sight by smelling Joseph's shirt, the soul can also be healed by the perfume of truth. Rumi urges us to become like Jacob, weeping and longing, for that fragrance will guide us home to Eden.

Poem Verses

The Powerless Self

We have spoken many words—
but in truth,
we are nothing
without God's mercy.
Without His grace
and the grace of His chosen ones,
even an angel's page
would be dark with ignorance.

Prayer for Divine Grace

O God,
Giver of every good,
there's no one
but You to name.
You've guided us this far,
You've hidden our shame.
Now let this drop of knowledge
You once placed in my soul
return—
return to Your boundless sea.

Rescue it,
O Lord,
from this muddy body,
from desire,
before clay absorbs it,
before the wind scatters it.

God's Dominion Over All Things

Yet even if it's lost,
You can call it back.
No drop ever escapes
Your hidden storehouse.
Even if it vanishes
into a thousand nothings,
the moment You summon,
it will rise,
head bowed in longing.

Your decree draws life
out of death—
every opposite
slays its twin,
yet You make them live again.

Caravan after caravan,
Lord,
streams from the void
into being.

Night's Death, Morning's Resurrection

Each night,
our thoughts
and knowing
are swept away—
sunk into a sea of silence.
But at dawn,
Your saints rise up again,
like fish surfacing from deep
waters.

Cycle of Death and Return

In autumn,
leaves fall by the thousands,
branches stand bare,
and in the garden
even the crow
dons mourning robes.

But then—
a command from the King
rings out:
"O Death,
give back what you devoured—
the leaves, the herbs,
the blades of grass!"

The Inner Garden

O brother,
pause—
see how every breath
carries both spring
and fall within you.

Look inward:
there is a garden there,
moist with life,
bright with roses,
cypresses,
jasmine.

The branches are hidden
by their own abundance.
A vast plain,
a shining palace,
concealed beneath
a riot of bloom.

Scent of the Invisible Rose

These words,
breathed from Universal Reason,
carry the perfume
of that unseen garden.

Have you ever smelled a rose
without a rose existing?
Seen wine foam
without wine beneath it?

The scent is your guide—
it leads you to Paradise,
to the fountain of Kawthar.

Fragrance opens the blind eye—
Jacob's sight returned
with a scent.
Foul smells cloud vision,
but the scent of Joseph
restores it.

You may not be a Joseph,
but be a Jacob—
weep,
ache,
seek.

Die Before Pride

(Verses 1905–1912)

Summary

This luminous teaching invites the seeker to abandon the false pride that veils the soul from divine light. The "Sage of Ghazna" (likely referring to the great spiritual master al-Ghazali or the image of the perfected saint) counsels against arrogance, especially when one has no spiritual or outer beauty to justify it. Instead, the seeker is urged to be like Jacob, weeping in longing before Divine Beauty (symbolized by Joseph), not pretending to possess what they lack.

Rumi then explains the deeper meaning behind the parrot's "death"—true spiritual death is not physical, but a surrender into prayerful humility and a sense of neediness before God. Only through this self-emptying can the breath of Christ (symbol of Divine Spirit) revive the heart. Just as rock cannot respond to

springtime's call, the soul hardened by ego cannot blossom. But if one becomes earth—receptive, lowly, open, then spiritual flowers of many colours will bloom.

The invitation is clear: let go of self-importance, become nothing, and be made alive by the Divine.

Poem Verses

Listen to This Wisdom

from the Sage of Ghazna—
Let it bring new life
to your weary bones:

Disdain belongs
to the rose-faced ones.
If your face lacks beauty,
don't clothe yourself in scorn.

It is ugly
for the unlovely
to act with disdain—
like eye-ache
in one who cannot see.

In the Presence of Beauty

Before the radiance
of Joseph,
do not pretend
you are the moon.

Don't posture—
bring only
the prayers
and sighs
of Jacob.

What the parrot taught
about dying
was not death itself,
but humble supplication.

So die
into your own
pleading—
become dust
before the Lord
in need
and poverty of spirit.

Revived by Divine Breath

That the breath of Jesus
might breathe through you—
that your being
might become
as radiant and blessed

as his.

Can the Spring
make stone blossom?

No.

So become earth—
soft and receptive—
and see what flowers bloom
in you.

You have been
a heart-wounding rock
for years.

Just once,
for the sake of grace—
be earth.

The Voice That Wakes the Dead

(Verses 1913–1950)

Summary

This luminous passage recounts the story of a harper in the time of Caliph ʻUmar—an old musician so spiritually potent that his melodies could revive the dead, likened to the angel Isráfíl who will awaken the dead on the Day of Resurrection. Rūmī uses this tale as a doorway into the deeper mystery of spiritual hearing. The music of the saints—like that of prophets—does not reach the physical ear; it sings to the heart and awakens only those freed from ego and sin. The saints are living trumpets of the Divine, their voices stirring dead souls back to life—not through their own power, but as pure instruments of God's will.

Rūmī then unveils a profound teaching on Divine agency: God speaks and acts through the saint, saying, "I am your tongue, I am your sight." This is the mystical station of fanā' (annihilation of the self) and baqā' (abiding in God), where the servant and the King become indistinguishable in Divine intimacy. Light is passed through this lineage—from Prophet to saint to seeker. Whether the light comes directly from the source or through the chain of transmission, the wine of truth remains unchanged. The message is clear: Awaken to the voice. Return from spiritual death. Drink from any cup, so long as it carries His fire.

Poem Verses

The Harper in the Graveyard

Have you heard—
in the time of 'Umar,
there lived an old harper,
a minstrel so radiant
that even the nightingale
was driven to ecstasy
by the tremble of his song.

His breath, a sacred adornment
in every gathering—
his melody lifted the dead.

Like Isráfíl,
whose trumpet will one day
call lifeless bones to rise,
his music stitched wings to
elephants,
made dry souls bloom,
rekindled those long forgotten
beneath the earth.

The prophets, too,
hold songs within—
songs not of this world,
but of the secret gardens
that lie beyond it.

Yet the worldly ear
hears none of this.
Clogged by sin,
it cannot catch the notes
of the heart's longing.

Even the song of the peri
goes unheard,
though it sings nearby—
for both man and spirit
are caged in the prison
of ignorance.

A Call Beyond the Veil

O gathering of Jinn and men,
recite Sūrat al-Raḥmān—
and know:
"If you can pass beyond,
then pass."

The saints—God's living Isráfíls—
call out inwardly:
"O you scattered particles
of lā—the realm of No!"

Lift your heads
from the sleep of denial.
Your souls were never born,
nor will they die.
You were never made of dust.

If I were to sing
just one breath
of those saintly melodies,
souls would rise
from every grave.

Draw near,
the voice is not far...
but it may not yet be given
to your ears.

The Saints Are His Voice

The saints are Isráfíls
in this age—
by their voices,
dead hearts stir,
wrapped in the linens of the self.

"This voice," they cry,
"is not of the world—
this is the sound
that brings the dead to life."

We had died,
our bones forgotten—
until the Friend's voice
gathered us whole.

Whether it comes
veiled or unveiled,
it is the same Breath
that touched Mary
in her solitude.

Return to the Living

You whose hearts
have rotted beneath your skins—
rise!
Let the voice of the Friend
call you back from non-existence.

Though it comes
through the throat of His servant,
know:
it is the speech of the King.

God has said to him:
"I am your tongue,
your eyes,
your senses,
your joy and your wrath."

He hears by Me,
He sees by Me—
what need is there to say,
'He possesses Divine awareness'?

He has lost himself
in bewildered love,
and now
I belong to him,
for 'God shall belong to him.'

The Light Passed Down

At times I say,
"It is you."
At times,
"It is I."
Yet always,
I am the Sun.

Wherever I shine
from the lamp of breath,
shadows flee,
and tangled lives untie.

Even what the sun of this world
cannot illumine—
My breath
turns it to morning.

To Adam
He showed the Divine Names
with His own Light—
to the rest,
He showed them through Adam.

Whether the light
reaches you
from the Source or a flame,
from the jug
or from the gourd—
drink.

The Chain of Light

The gourd is close
to the jar.

The Prophet said:
"Blessed is he who saw me,
and blessed is he
who saw the one
who saw me."

A lamp
lit from the candle—
still carries its fire.

Even if a hundred lamps
pass the flame,

the last one
is still
a meeting with the first.

So take your light
from the final saint
or the first.
The wine is the same.

Catch the Breath of God

(Verses 1951–2012)

Summary

This luminous and wide-ranging passage from the Masnavi weaves together themes of Divine breath (nafas al-Raḥmān), spiritual awakening, desire, and the annihilation of the self. Rumi begins with a prophetic teaching—God's merciful breath moves in the world, awakening those ready to receive it. Like a passing wind, it cannot be caught by inattentive souls; we must be present, receptive, open-hearted.

He contrasts the movement of this Divine breath with the gross appetites of the ego. A morsel of food, a thorn mistaken for a date—these become symbols of how base desires obstruct spiritual perception. Rumi evokes the image of

Luqmān and of a camel carrying roses yet longing for thorns, revealing how the ego seeks harm over healing.

He calls us to extract the thorn of greed and illusion from our foot so our inner eye may open. Only then can we walk the path toward the rose garden of the soul. He then shifts to the mystery of the Spirit: neither male nor female, it is a sweetness that does not depend on anything external. The true lover becomes sugar itself, not merely sweetened by it.

Reason—partial and limited—cannot understand love. Even the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in love's embrace, transcends ritual obligation, forgetting prayer for a moment of Divine union. The narrative ends in a cosmic vision of saints whose bodies and souls are pure spirit, living reminders of the Prophet's (PBUH) presence. Rumi calls us to see beyond the shell of selfhood, beyond time and direction, and journey in the rain of God's mercy.

This is an invitation to breathe with God.

Poem Verses

The Wind of Mercy Blows

The Prophet said,
"In these days, the breaths of God
come softly upon the world.
Open your heart—
listen.
Catch the breath as it passes."

A breath came,
saw you,
and slipped away—
it gave new life to whom it wished
and disappeared.

Now another breath has come.
Be awake,
O friend,
lest you miss this one, too.

The Breath That Revives

That fiery soul—
once cold and still—
leapt alive
when this wind touched it.

This isn't mere motion
like that of beasts—
this is the trembling

of the Tree of Paradise,
the Tūbā tree,
whose fruits feed souls,
not mouths.

If this breath reached
the sky and the earth,
they'd melt,
like gall turning to water—
so vast, so fierce is this spirit
it shook the cosmos with fear.

Remember what God said:
"They refused to bear the Trust."
The mountain's heart turned to
blood
from terror.

The Missed Moment

Last night,
this breath came again—
but food
blocked the door of my soul.

Like Luqmān,
held hostage for a mere bite—
a single bite!
How shameful, how sad.

O morsel,
get out of the way.

A thorn has lodged in Luqmān's
foot—
but not truly.
There's no thorn, no wound.

It's desire, not truth,
that has blinded you.
The "thorn" you thought was a
date—
was greed disguised.

The Thorn-Eating Beast

How can Luqmān's spirit,
the garden of God,
have thorns in its foot?

You, camel of the ego,
graze on thorns,
yet carry
a load of roses—
gifts from the Prophet's light.

The scent of these roses
has birthed a hundred rosaries in
you,
but still
you long for brambles.

How long,
wandering from desert to desert,
will you cry,
"Where is the rose garden?"

Pull the Thorn and See

Until you pluck
this thorn from your foot,
your eye stays blind.

You—who cannot be held
by the seven heavens—
are stuck,
pierced by a splinter of illusion.

The Prophet came to harmonize
the soul.
He whispered to the soul,
"O Humayrā',
strike the iron in the fire—
forge the shoe
that makes even mountains blush
like rubies."

The Feminine Spirit

But the Spirit—
though named "feminine"—
has no gender.

It is beyond
man and woman.
It does not live on bread,
nor change with wind or water.

It is sweetness itself,
the essence of delight.

If your joy comes from sugar,
sugar may leave.
But if you become sugar
through loyalty—
how could sugar be separated from
sugar?

The Lover's Madness

When the lover drinks
from the wine
that flows within—
even Reason
sits stunned, alone.

The partial mind,
clever but limited,
denies Love,
though it pretends
to be your friend.

But until it surrenders,
until it becomes "nothing,"
it remains a veil.
Even angels must be annihilated
before they taste this love.

Ecstasy Beyond Mind

It speaks kindly in thought and
action,
but when the cup of ecstasy is
passed—
it freezes.

It cannot bear
to be unmade.
Still,
many are unmade
without consent.

The Spirit
is pure perfection,
its call
is the call to fullness.

The Prophet said,
"O Bilāl,
sing again!
Let your voice rise—
breathe from that breath
I blew into your heart."

That same breath
once stunned Adam,
and left even Heaven's angels
speechless.

Love Interrupted Prayer

One night,
the Prophet heard that breath
in Bilāl's call.
He was swept away,
so lost in love
he forgot the dawn prayer—
until the sun had long risen.

That night
his soul kissed
the hand of the Divine Bride.
Yes, I said Bride—
but don't mistake the metaphor.

Permission to Speak

If the Beloved
had silenced me,
I would have been silent.

But He keeps saying,
"Speak, speak on!
This is the will
of the unseen world."

Faultless Light

Only the ignorant
see fault.
The Pure Spirit—
cannot see fault.

Even disbelief,
in relation to the Source,
is wisdom.
But when applied to us—
it wounds.

If there's one flaw
in a thousand gifts,
it's like the woody stalk

in sugarcane.
Both go on the scale—
the body and the soul—
and both,
in the holy ones,
are sweet.

Where the Saints Dwell

Their bodies are as pure
as their spirits.
Their words,
their forms—
pure spirit.

Those who hate them
are dust.
They rot to earth.

But the lovers of God
turn to salt—
a salt so refined,
even the Prophet
shines more clearly through it
than any Hadith.

The Hidden Ones

That salt lives on
in his heirs.
Seek them.

He sits before you—
but where is your "before"?
Where is your soul
that knows what's "before"?

If you still think
you have "behind" or "below,"
you're still trapped
in the prison of flesh.

Spirit
has no direction,
no compass.

Let the King's light
open your inner eye.

Don't mistake
this shell of grief and joy
for your true self.

You are absence—
and where is "before" or "after"
in absence?

Let the Rain Fall

It's a day of rain—
let it fall.

Let it wash you
toward night,
not with the rain of this earth,
but with the rain
of the Lord.

The Rain Beyond the Sky

(Verses 2013–2071)

Summary

This luminous tale begins with the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) attending the burial of a friend. In his return, he is dry, though rain has fallen—Aisha, full of wonder, touches him in disbelief. What kind of rain is this that leaves no trace on his cloak? He reveals to her the truth of spiritual realms: that there is a sky beyond the sky, rain beyond rain—an unseen mercy falling from the Divine, not the clouds. This otherworldly rain nourishes hearts and souls, reviving the dead like spring awakens the trees.

The poem weaves together Qur'anic allusions, Sufi teachings, and metaphysical insight to show how the physical world is mirrored and animated by the spiritual. Trees become saints, saints become spring, and rain becomes

revelation. The Prophet (PBUH) speaks of different rains—some that heal, some that destroy—just as different winds of spirit or ego either nurture or harm the soul. Forgetfulness is shown as necessary for the world to function, but intelligence—a light from the Unseen—is the true water of life.

In the end, the Prophet (PBUH) gently redirects Aisha's question to a deeper teaching, and we are left with a hushed sense of awe, standing between the grave and the sky, listening for rain that no eye can see.

Poem Verses

A Prophet Walks the Graveyard

One day, the Prophet walked
among the graves—
his friend had passed,
and he had come
to bless the soul,
to shape the earth
around the seed of spirit,
quietly planting it
in God's waiting ground.

Like trees,
the dead raise their hands
from the soil—
silent,
yet speaking,
if only we had
ears that could hear.

Voices of the Hidden Earth

Each tree
is a green-tongued sign
with outstretched arms,
sharing secrets
from the earth's hidden heart.
Once bare as crows in winter,
they've become peacocks—
their beauty awakened
by spring's unseen hand.

God buried them
in the frost,
then raised them again
in leaf and fragrance.
And so, the doubters scoff,
"This world has no Maker—
it simply is."
But God
has caused gardens
to bloom
in the hearts of His friends.

Their fragrance—
a mystery,
travels unseen,
tearing doubt's veil.
Yet the deniers,
like beetles,
turn away
from the scent of the rose.

Rain of the Unseen

The Prophet returned home,
his face glowing
with hidden rain.
ʻĀ'isha,
beloved and wise,
touched his turban,
his hair,
his sleeves—
"Where is the wetness?" she asked,
"Rain has fallen,
yet your clothes are dry."

He smiled.
"O pure-hearted one,
what cloth now covers your head?"
She said,
"I wrapped myself in your plaid."

"That is why,"
he said,
"your pure eye
was opened to the rain
from beyond this sky."
There are other clouds,
and another heaven.

Skies of the Spirit

In the realm of spirit
lie skies
beyond this sky—
mountains, oceans,
depths,
and heights.

Another sun,
another light.
Rain, not of this earth,
but falling from mercy,
or majesty.
Some rains nourish,
others wither.
Spring brings color.
Autumn, decay.

So too
in the Unseen
are winds
of gain and loss,
breaths of saints—
the Abdāl—
that grow green gardens
in the soul.

If your soul is dry,

do not blame
the breeze.
It came.
You just turned away.

The Secret of Spring

The Prophet said,
"Do not shield your body
from spring's cold.
It heals your spirit
as spring revives the tree.
But flee the cold of autumn—
for it sickens the vine."

Many heard
only the outer sense.
But spring and autumn
are veils—
they point
to soul and self.
The lower self is autumn,
the spirit,
a dawn of spring.

If your reason is weak,
seek the one
whose reason
is whole.
From the whole,
your part
is restored.

The Breath That Warms the Garden

The saints' words—
even if sharp,
even if soft—
are the breath of spring.
Do not cover yourself
from them.
Their every word
is fire that warms
and water that gives life.
Their joy is not for display—
but for planting
new leaves in the soul.

A dry tree
will not flower,
no matter how sweet the wind.
But where the soul is ripe,
a single breath
brings forth
a thousand roses.

The Mystery of the Rain

ʻĀ'isha asked again,
"O light of God,
what kind of rain
fell today?
Was it a mercy,
or a warning
from Majesty?"

He said,
"It was rain
to soothe the sorrow
in Adam's children.
If grief burned
without relief,
the world
would wither.

If man stayed
always in remembrance,
the world
would collapse.
This world needs
some forgetfulness,
just to go on.

Intelligence
belongs to the next world.
Here,
greed is ice.
The sun of spirit
must melt it
drop by drop.

If too much flows
from the Unseen,
no vice,
no virtue,
would remain.

So hush, beloved.
Return now
to the story
of the minstrel's song."

Glossary of Arabic, Persian, and Key Conceptual Terms

This glossary provides brief explanations of Arabic and Persian terms, along with key conceptual words, that appear throughout this English translation of the Masnavi. While not all terms are found verbatim in the original text, they are used here to convey the deeper symbolic, spiritual, or cultural meanings essential to understanding the poems and their interpretations.

Abdal - A rank of hidden saints in Sufi cosmology, the "Substitutes," who possess the spiritual power to intervene in the unseen realm of cause and effect.

Abraham - (Ibrahim in Islam) is a major prophet revered for his unwavering faith and his turning away from idolatry to worship the one, unchanging God.

Abū Jahl - A historical figure and one of the main antagonists of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Mecca, who symbolizes ignorance despite sharing a common human form.

'Ad - An ancient Arabian tribe mentioned in the Qur'an that was destroyed by a punishing wind for their arrogance and disbelief.

Adab - Spiritual courtesy, discipline, and right conduct; the proper inner and outer comportment on the spiritual path.

Adam - Adam, in Islam, is recognized as the first prophet and the first man. He was divinely taught "the Names" or inner realities of all things, signifying his elevated status above the angels.

Ahmed or Ahmad - Another name for the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The name means "the most praised" and is used as a source of spiritual protection.

'A'isha - A'isha was one of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH),

who is the central figure of Islam. She was known for her intelligence and wisdom.

Alast - A reference to the pre-eternal "Day of the Covenant" mentioned in the Qur'an, when all human souls testified to God's lordship.

al-Hayy - One of the names of God in Islam, meaning "The Ever-Living," emphasizing God's eternal and life-giving nature.

Alif - The first letter of the Arabic alphabet, a straight vertical stroke. It symbolizes the absolute, singular unity of God. When used with 'yā' (the last letter of the Arabic alphabet), it can symbolize the entire range of created forms and their inherent opposition.

Allah - The Arabic name for the one God.

Amīr - A title for a noble, commander, or leader, used here for the disciples appointed as successors.

'Amr - A common Arabic name.

Angel - A celestial being created by God from light, entrusted with specific divine duties. In Islamic belief, angels are sinless and obedient, serving as messengers, recorders of deeds, and agents of mercy or judgment. In Sufi and poetic traditions, angels often symbolize purity, submission, and the soul's higher, uncorrupted nature.

Antichrist - The Dajjal or false messiah in Islamic eschatology, a figure of great deception who appears before the end of time.

Arif - The gnostic, or one who possesses direct, experiential knowledge ('irfan) of God, and whose inner state is one of constant communion.

Astrolabe - An ancient astronomical instrument used here metaphorically by Rumi to describe Love as the tool that measures and navigates the mysteries of the Divine.

Awliya' - The "Friends of God" or saints in Islam.

āyāt - A Qur'anic term for 'signs' or 'verses'; in a Sufi context, it refers to the manifestations of Divine reality in creation that the awakened soul can perceive.

Azrael - The Angel of Death in the Islamic tradition.

Bani-Israil - The Children of Israel, a term used in the Qur'an to refer to the followers of Prophet Moses.

Baqa - The Sufi mystical concept of subsistence or abiding in God, the state that follows the annihilation (fana) of the self.

Barakah - Divine blessing, grace, or spiritual power that is believed to be present in sacred names, people, and objects.

Başīrah - Spiritual vision or insight; the ability of the purified heart to perceive divine realities that are veiled from the physical senses.

Bilal - A close companion of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the first muezzin.

Buraq - The celestial steed that carried the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during his Night Journey (Isra and Mi'raj) symbolizes divine grace that assists the sincere striver.

Caliph - The title for a ruler of the Muslim community.

Dervish - A member of a Sufi order; a spiritual seeker who has chosen a path of piety and asceticism.

Devil - The ultimate tempter (Iblis or Shaytan).

Dhawq - Literally "tasting"; the subtle, intuitive spiritual perception that allows one to discern truth from falsehood, a faculty of the purified heart.

Dog of the Cave - A reference to the loyal dog in the Qur'anic story of the People of the Cave, who, through association with saints, gained spiritual honor.

Elixir - A mythical substance believed to turn base metals into gold, used here metaphorically for the transformative power of the saints' presence.

Fana - The Sufi mystical concept of annihilation or 'unselfing' in the divine presence, where the individual ego dissolves into true being.

Fariduddin Attar - A renowned 12th-century Persian Sufi poet and mystic.

Gabriel - The Archangel (Jibril) who brought revelation to the prophets.

Ghatafar - The name of a street mentioned in the Masnavi specifies the location where the beloved goldsmith could be found.

Ghayrah - Divine jealousy, which in Sufism means God's desire for the soul to be attached to nothing but Him.

Ghazna - A historical city in modern-day Afghanistan, associated with great Sufi masters.

Goldsmith - A recurring symbol in Rumi's poetry representing the Divine Beloved or a spiritual artisan who purifies the soul through the fire of love and tribulation.

Gospel - The sacred scripture of the Christians (Injil), which Rumi describes as containing prophecies of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) coming.

Hadith - A report of the teachings, deeds, and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), through which the Prophet's (PBUH) light is transmitted.

Hal - A transient spiritual 'state' or ecstasy that comes and goes.

Haman - The wicked minister of Pharaoh mentioned in the Qur'an, symbolizing the corrupting influence of a bad advisor.

Hū - A sacred name for God in Sufism, meaning 'He,' referring to the absolute, unknowable Divine Essence

from which all thought and being originates.

Hūd - A prophet in Islam sent to the people of 'Ad.

Humā - A mythical Persian bird of good fortune, often associated with royalty, used here as a symbol for a soul transformed by true divine guidance.

Humayra' - A term of endearment meaning “little reddish one”, reportedly used by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for his wife ‘A’isha.

Husam al-Din - Rumi's scribe and successor.

Iblis - The name of the devil or Satan in the Islamic tradition, whose defining sin was the envy and arrogance he felt toward Adam.

Ikhlās - The spiritual state of sincerity and purity of intention, dedicating one's actions to God alone without any desire for worldly recognition.

Ikhtiyar - The concept of free will or choice, which Rumi presents as a 'phantom' in human hands, but a reality for those who act through God.

'Illiyyin - A term from the Qur'an referring to the highest of the heavenly realms, the destined abode of the righteous and the prophets.

Innā li'Llah wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn - A quotation from the Qur'an (2:156) meaning 'Truly, we belong to God, and truly, to Him we are returning,' encapsulating the principle that all creation reverts to the Divine.

Isma'il - The son of Abraham, who, in the Islamic tradition, willingly submitted to being sacrificed by his father in an ultimate act of faith.

Isráfil - The archangel in Islamic eschatology who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection, whose call is likened to God summoning the soul back to the body.

Jabbārī - A divine attribute referring to God's overwhelming majesty, power, or sovereignty, which should inspire awe and humility.

Jabr - Divine compulsion or determinism, which for the saints is not a state of bondage but a radiant surrender to God's will.

Jacob - A Prophet in Islam (Ya'qub) whose story in the Qur'an, particularly his grief over his son Joseph, is a powerful symbol of patient endurance and longing for the beloved.

Jesus - A major prophet in Islam ('Isa).

Jihad - Literally 'struggle'; the Prophet (PBUH) is quoted as distinguishing between the 'lesser Jihad' (outward battle) and the 'greater Jihad' (the inner battle against the ego).

Jinn - A class of unseen beings created from fire, addressed in the Qur'an along with humanity.

John the Baptist - A prophet in Islam (Yahya) to whom a mountain offered refuge, showing that even inanimate

nature responds to and protects the friends of God.

Joseph - A Prophet in Islam (Yusuf), whose story symbolizes divine beauty, spiritual purity, and the eventual reunion with the one who longs for him.

Kasb - The Islamic concept of earning, striving, or human effort, which is presented as complementary to divine trust.

Kawthar - A celestial river or fountain in Paradise mentioned in the Qur'an, symbolizing an inexhaustible source of divine blessing and knowledge.

Khalifa - A vicar, successor, or representative.

Khidr - A mysterious and wise figure in Islamic tradition who possesses esoteric knowledge from God and acts in ways that defy conventional understanding.

La - The Arabic word for no or nothingness.

Layla - The beloved of Majnun, symbolizing the Divine Beloved or the ultimate object of spiritual yearning.

Luqman - A wise sage mentioned in the Qur'an, used as an archetype of one whose spiritual progress can be halted by a single base desire.

Majnun - An archetypal figure in Persian literature representing the ecstatic, "mad" lover of God, whose love transcends reason and societal norms.

Mansur - A reference to Mansur al-Hallaj, a famous Sufi martyr whose 'wine' symbolizes ecstatic, unitive consciousness.

Maqam - A permanent spiritual 'station' or level of attainment on the Sufi path, representing a stable and abiding union with the Divine.

Ma'rifa - Gnostic or direct, experiential knowledge of God, a central goal of the Sufi path that transcends intellectual understanding.

Mars - A planet whose astrological influence is said to incline a person's soul toward conflict and battle.

Mary - The mother of Jesus (Maryam), who received the divine breath in her solitude, symbolizing the pure receptivity of the soul to God's command.

Masnavi - The title of Rumi's major poetic work, literally meaning "The Spiritual Couplets," a vast collection of spiritual teachings, parables, and mystical insights.

Medina - The city where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established the first Muslim community.

Merv - An ancient city in Central Asia, paired with Rayy to emphasize the vast, irreconcilable distance between two seemingly similar things.

Messiah - A title for Jesus (ʿĪsā), meaning “the anointed one.” In Islamic tradition, it affirms his special

status as a divinely chosen prophet and servant of God.

Mīm, wāw, mīm, nūn - The individual Arabic letters that spell 'mu'min' (believer).

Moses - A major prophet in Islam (Musa) for whom the sea parted, symbolizing God's power to transform elements for His chosen ones.

Mother of the Book - A reference to the Qur'anic concept of 'Umm al-Kitab', the primordial, heavenly source of all divine revelation, known only to God.

Mount Sinai - The mountain where Moses received revelation.

Muhammad - The final Prophet (PBUH) of Islam.

Musaylima - A historical figure from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who falsely claimed prophethood, known in the Islamic tradition as "Musaylima the Liar."

Mustafá - A title of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) meaning "The Chosen One."

Nafas al-Rahmān - The 'Breath of the Merciful,' a Sufi concept for the divine, life-giving emanations of God that continuously create and sustain the world.

Nafs - The carnal soul or lower self, often described in Islamic and Sufi thought as insatiable, fiery, and more dangerous than any external enemy. It is the inner source of ego, desire, and rebellion, and in some traditions, it is explicitly likened to Hell itself.

Nightingale - A symbol for the loving soul, which cries out in longing for reunion with the Rose (the Divine Beloved).

Nimrod - The tyrannical king who cast Abraham into the fire.

Noah - A major prophet in Islam (Nuh) who built the Ark to save the faithful from the great flood.

PBUH - An abbreviation for “Peace Be Upon Him,” a devotional phrase traditionally said or written by Muslims after mentioning the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It is a sign of deep respect and spiritual reverence. The phrase is the English rendering of the Arabic blessing صلى الله عليه وسلم (sallallahu ʿalayhi wa sallam), meaning “May God's peace and blessings be upon him.”

In this English translation, such honorifics are omitted from the body of the text for stylistic clarity. However, reverence is fully intended whenever the name Muhammad or the Prophet appears.

People of the Cave - A reference to the Qur'anic story of the 'Aṣḥāb al-Kahf', pious youths miraculously put to sleep by God to protect them from persecution.

Peri - A fairy or supernatural being in Persian mythology, whose beautiful

song is said to be unheard by those caged in ignorance.

Persian - The language of classical Iranian literature and poetry, also known as Farsi. It is the original language of Rumi's Masnavi and a key medium for expressing Sufi thought, rich in metaphor, symbolism, and mystical nuance.

Pharaoh - A tyrannical ruler of ancient Egypt, most often referring to the Pharaoh who opposed Moses (Mūsā). In Islamic and Sufi literature, he symbolizes the ego's arrogance, denial of divine truth, and the oppressive power of the lower self (nafs).

Preserved Tablet - The 'Lawh al-Mahfuz' in Islamic theology, the celestial tablet upon which all of destiny is written, which a purified soul can embody.

Qadar - Divine destiny or decree.

Qārūn - The sacred scripture of Islam.

Rayy - An ancient city in Persia, used here in conjunction with Merv to signify a great geographical and, by extension, spiritual distance.

Return to thy Lord - A direct quotation from the Qur'an (89:28), representing the ultimate divine call for the tranquil soul to return to its source in God.

Rose - A classic symbol in Persian poetry for the Divine Beloved, whose absence is mourned by the Nightingale.

Rüm - The Byzantine Empire or Rome.

Salsabil - The name of a celestial spring in Paradise mentioned in the Qur'an, whose water symbolizes pure spiritual nourishment.

Samarcand - A historic city in Central Asia.

Satan - The devil or Iblis.

Shams of Tabriz - Rumi's spiritual master, friend, and transformative companion. He represents the "Sun of Spirit" or the perfect spiritual guide.

Shayban - A pious shepherd known in Islamic lore for his miraculous ability to protect his flock by drawing a line on the ground.

Shaytan - The devil or Satan, whose whispers represent the distracting and deceptive thoughts that prevent one from seeing the "Face of God."

Shirk - The sin of idolatry or polytheism in Islam; specifically, associating partners with God.

Sijjin - A term from the Qur'an referring to the lowest of the depths or a prison in Hell, the destined abode of the heedless and wicked.

Símurgh - A mythical, benevolent bird in Persian mythology, often used in Sufi literature to symbolize the Divine or the perfected spiritual guide. In The Conference of the Birds by Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, the Símurgh represents the ultimate truth the seekers discover within themselves, illustrating the Sufi

idea of divine unity and self-transcendence.

Sinai - The mountain where Moses received revelation, used as a symbol for a place of direct, overwhelming divine manifestation.

Solomon - A prophet and king in Islamic tradition (Sulaymān), known for his God-given ability to understand the language of birds and command the forces of nature. In Sufi literature, he often symbolizes inner wisdom and the spiritual mastery to perceive the soul's subtle truths.

Sufi - A practitioner of Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, who seeks direct, experiential knowledge of God.

Sultan - A term for a monarch or ruler, often used to address a king with respect and acknowledge his authority.

Sūrat al-Rahman - The 55th chapter of the Qur'an, 'The Chapter of the Most Merciful.'

Tawakkul - The Islamic concept of profound trust and reliance on God's plan, even in the face of incomprehensible events.

Tawhid - The foundational Islamic principle of the absolute Oneness of God, the ultimate reality recognized beyond all transient forms.

Tūbā - A mythical tree in Paradise whose fruits are said to nourish souls, symbolizing spiritual sustenance.

Turcoman - A term for Turkic people.

Ulü 'l-albab - A Qur'anic term meaning "people of understanding" or "those endowed with insight". It refers to individuals who reflect deeply, perceive inner truths, and act with wisdom rooted in spiritual awareness.

Umar - Umar ibn al-Khattab was the second of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (known in Arabic as the Khulafā' ar-Rāshidūn) and a senior companion to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Venus - A planet whose astrological influence is said to incline a person's soul toward joy and pleasure.

Vicar - A claimed successor to a spiritual guide, whose legitimacy is tested by their inner reality versus their outward claim.

Vizier - A high-ranking political advisor or minister.

Wahy - Divine revelation or inspiration.

Wali - A "friend of God" or saint in Islam, a person who has attained a high degree of spiritual proximity to the Divine.

Yā - The last letter of the Arabic alphabet, used with 'alif' to symbolize the full spectrum of contradiction, from end to beginning.

Zayd - A common Arabic name used in a hypothetical example to represent a person who commits an action (the doer).

Resources to Deepen Your Journey

The following online sources and books may offer helpful insights for readers who wish to explore Rumi's Masnavi and its Islamic Sufi context more deeply.

Online Gateways to Rumi and the Masnavi

Dar al-Masnavi – dar-al-masnavi.org

A rich website curated by scholar Dr. Ibrahim Gamard, focusing on Rumi's authentic Islamic context. It features the complete Persian Masnavi, multiple translations, articles, and audio recordings.

Masnavi.net

An interactive site offering the full Masnavi with side-by-side Persian and English text. It's an excellent tool for comparing the original with the translation and includes verse-by-verse audio.

Ganjoor – Ganjoor.net

A digital library of Persian poetry. For those curious about the original language, it provides the complete Persian texts of Rumi's works.

Masnavi Translations in Print

The Mathnawī (Complete), trans. Reynold A. Nicholson

The classic, complete English translation. His translation is famously literal and retains a formal, somewhat "Victorian" tone. While this can feel archaic, its precision is invaluable, and its volumes of commentary explaining the historical and spiritual context are an unparalleled resource for deep study.

The Masnavi (Oxford World's Classics), trans. Jawid Mojaddedi

The best modern, complete verse translation, both scholarly and highly readable. For most readers today, this is the ideal version for experiencing the Masnavi's poetic flow and spiritual depth in contemporary English.

Tales from the Masnavi, by A. J. Arberry

A perfect introduction for newcomers. Arberry presents Rumi's key stories in clear, engaging prose, setting aside the complex poetic digressions to make the spiritual lessons highly accessible.

Understanding Rumi and His World

The Triumphal Sun, by Annemarie Schimmel

A masterful study of Rumi's life, thought, and poetry by a world-renowned scholar. Schimmel connects Rumi's work to his deep Islamic faith and his transformative relationship with his teacher, Shams of Tabriz.

The Sufi Path of Love, by William C. Chittick

Perhaps the most accessible guide to Rumi's spiritual teachings. Chittick organizes Rumi's core ideas—on God, love, the soul, and the spiritual journey—by theme, letting Rumi speak in his own words. It is perfect for understanding the "why" behind the poetry.

The Garden of Truth, by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

A profound and clear introduction to Sufism, the mystical heart of Islam. This book provides the spiritual and philosophical context of Rumi's world, helping the reader understand the tradition he so beautifully expressed.

Rumi: Past and Present, East and West, by Franklin D. Lewis

The definitive biography of Rumi, covering his life, teachings, and legacy. Crucially, this work serves as an essential corrective, showing how Rumi's profound Islamic identity was often diluted in popular Western versions. It is the most comprehensive single book on Rumi available.

Rumi's Masnavi - A Journey Back to the Divine

Over 700 years ago, the Sufi mystic Jalāl al-Dīn Mu□ammad Rūmī began dictating a spiritual masterpiece that still speaks to seekers around the world. The Masnavi, composed in Persian and overflowing with parables, stories, and mystical teachings, is a timeless guide for the soul.

This new poetic rendering, based on Reynold A. Nicholson's landmark English translation, brings Rumi's luminous insights into contemplative, modern English. With rhythm and simplicity, the verses are arranged in short lines to help you slow down and reflect, just as they were meant to be received.

Throughout the journey, signposts and subheadings offer gentle guidance, allowing space to pause, listen, and let the deeper meanings unfold. Whether you are new to Rumi or returning to him with fresh eyes, this book invites you into a living conversation that transcends time and doctrine.

This first volume opens the gate to Rumi's epic, beginning where his luminous journey first unfolds. It is, in his own words, "the root of the root of the root of the religion."

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